

# WHO CARES?

*Creative Research Practice in the Space of the University*

**SCAPE 2011 Speaker Series**

*Dr Maria O'Connor*

*Presentation to Massey University College of Creative Arts,*

*21<sup>st</sup> March 2011*

# Academic Stats

- *Teacher:* Spatial Design Head of Postgraduate Studies, Year One Theoretical studies Programme Leader, Supervisor (PhD, Mphil, MA, Honours)
- *Creative Practice:* Writer, Filmmaker, Spatial Installation
- *Loves:* Continental philosophy of Derrida, Deleuze + Guattari, Heidegger, Blanchot, Levinas, Foucault, French Feminist philosophy (Irigaray, Cixous, Le Doeuff, Kristeva etc.), literature, experimental cinema, architecture, spatial design, intersection between art and architecture; ethics and politics of: sexual difference, image, space; sensate, material and reflective experiences
- *Less passionate about:* truth as correctness, metaphysical values of: stasis, light, fixity, logic, binaries, rationalism, individualism, transcendental signifiers; fundamentalism, objectivity

# Who Cares?

Qualifier (aka sub-title):

***Who Cares? Creative Research Practice in the Space of  
the University***

# Who Cares?

## ***Who Cares? Creative Research Practice in the Space of the University***

- The Space of the Institution (University)
- Ethics (care) for the sake of maintaining creative relevance
- The Politics of difference as an approach (aka methodology) for research

# Part One

## The Space of the Institution (University)

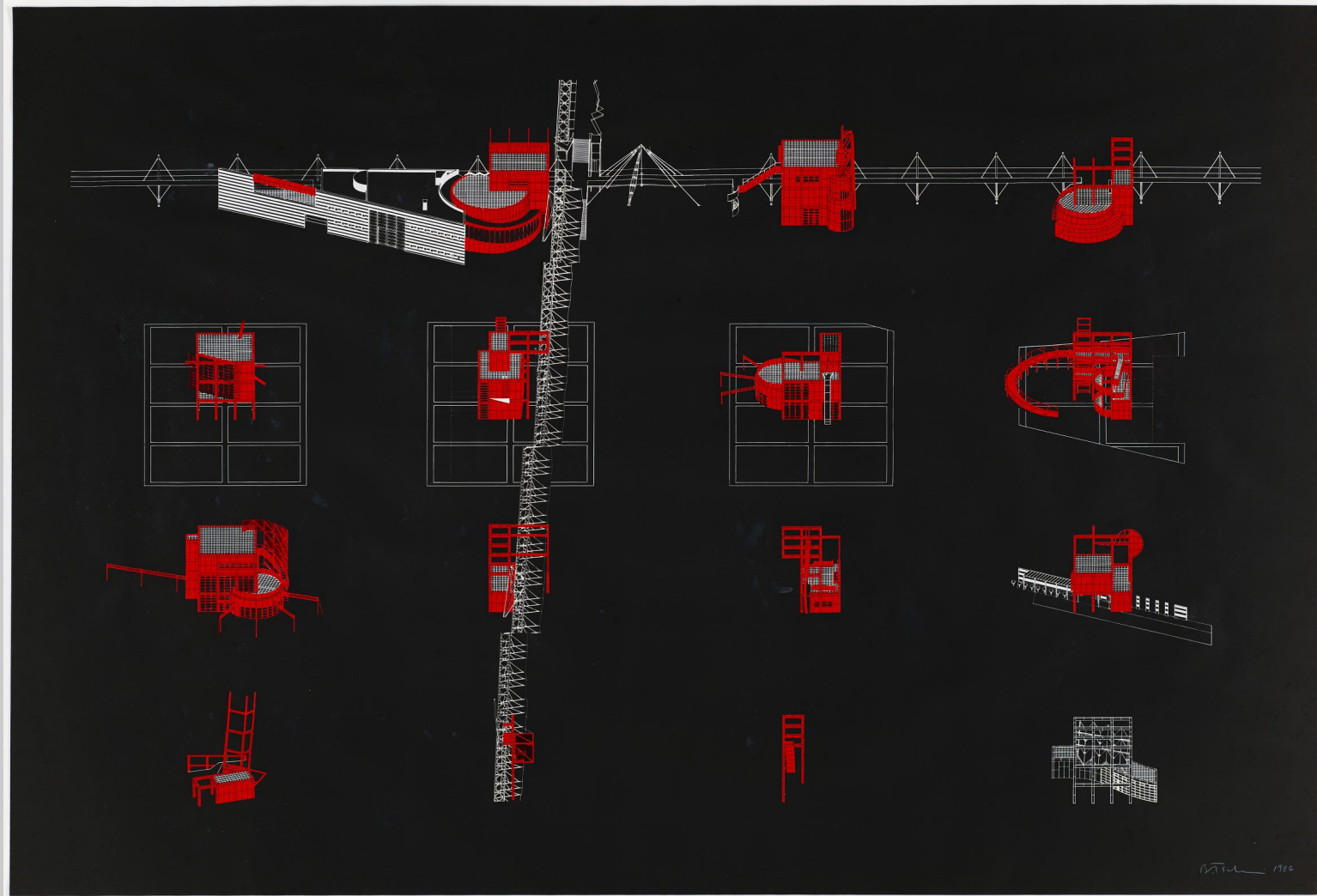


# The Space of the Institution (University)

No guinea of earned money [money earned by the woman] should go to rebuilding the college on the old plan; just as certainly none could be spent upon building a college upon a new plan; therefore the guinea should be earmarked 'Rags. Petrol. Matches.' And this note should be attached to it. 'Take this guinea and with it burn the college to the ground. Set fire to the old hypocrisies. Let the light of the burning building scare the nightingales and incarnadine the willows. And let the daughters of educated men dance around the fire and heap armful upon armful of dead leaves upon the flames. And let their mothers lean from the upper windows and cry, Let it blaze! Let it blaze! For we have done with this "education"!

Virginia Woolf. *Three Guineas*; cited in Jacques Derrida, *Cinders*, p. 67.

# Deconstructing the 'plan'



Bernard Tschumi's *Parc de la Villette, Paris, Follies and Galleries Isometrics* (1986), in gouache and color ink on a gelatin silver photograph

# Defending the Thesis — A Preface

## PAGE ONE:

### *Title of the Preface: CA: Chiffre d’Affaires (Her Turnover)*

ELLE NE PARLE PAS L’INNOMMÉE OR TU L’ENTENDRS MIEUX QUE MOI AVANT MOI EN CE MOMENT MÊME OU POURTANT SUR L’AUTRE COTÉ DE CET OUVRAGE MONUMENTAL JE TISSE DE MA VOIX POUR M’Y EFFACER CECI TIENS ME VOICI MANGE — APPROCHE-TOI — POUR LUI DONNER — BOIS

(SHE DOESN’T SPEAK THE UNNAMEABLE YET YOU HEAR HER BETTER THAN ME AHEAD OF ME AT THIS VERY MOMENT WHERE NONETHELESS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MONUMENTAL WORK I WEAVE MY VOICE SO AS TO BE EFFACED THIS TAKE IT HERE I AM EAT — GET NEARER — IN ORDER TO GIVE HIM/HER — DRINK)

Cette chose dont on ne sait rien, ni quel passé porte encore cette poussière grise de mots, ni quelle substance vint s’y consumer avant de s’y éteindre (savez-vous combine de types de cendres distinguent les naturalists? et de quel ‘bois’ telles cendres parfois rappellent un désir?), une telle chose, dira-t-on encore qu’elle garde même une identité de cendre?

(This thing of which one knows nothing, knows neither what past is still carried in these gray dusty words, nor what substance came to consume itself there before extinguishing itself there (do you know how many types of cinders the naturalists distinguish? And for what “wood” such cinders sometimes recall a desire?); will one still say of such a thing that it (*elle* — she) even preserves (is the very guard, the self-same guard of) the (an) identity of the cinder.)

### **Footnote:**

The title to the Preface engages a play with multiple registers. Throughout the thesis we attempt to engage persistently with a Derridean questioning of economy, as “restricted” and “general.” The former relates to what we place under the heading of the calculable, with its ledger balance of profit and loss, its capital and speculation that is as much an effect of the text as it is an understanding of truth as adequation. The second refers more to what Derrida engages as the “general text” which engages the operations of deconstruction and a contamination of the boundaries that would be in place for the law of the household to take effect. Throughout our thesis we come to re-iterate this play of disseminating a balance ledger or the reserves of a treasury or archive. *Chiffre d’Affaires*, abbreviated *CA*, refers to the turnover or sales made by a business. It implies the tallying up of the whole of an enterprise to ascertain its profitability. *Chiffrer* as a verb refers to a range of practices engaging with the calculable, including to measure, figure, add up, assay, but also to encipher or encrypt, and to monogram. The monogram signature of this thesis is itself constituted on an affair of the ear, on the hearing of an undecidable *Sa* or *Ca* in the determinations of the profitability of this enterprise. Who is it returned to, this turnover? To *Sa* (her) to *Ca* (an it is)? Our aim in this Preface is to immolate this as a question, as a question of the return. It is precisely his question that opens the trajectory of the circle. Her angle would have already contaminated his calculations. She returns nothing, here in this text, at this self-same moment. *We* need to say something immediately about a “we” that courses through the text of this thesis, a dislodging of the univocity of and egoistic or authorial “I,” and a refusal of a unified collectivity of the “we” of a common voice or community of agreement. Neither the singularity of an original position nor the subsumed agreement with a community of scholars, our text’s “we” aims at an abrasion to the neutrality of a being-in-common, and aligns with a complication of the paths of return that inscribe the circle of disciplinary closure. Our word-thing, secreted in our text is a homophonic play across languages, an impossible I/We, or the impossible bind, double bind or stricture of the saying of this doublet. Our word-thing alliterates a series: *Knee/Knell/Kelle/Crypt/Quelle*. It is launched in the *Je/Nous*, the *genou* or knee, in which we also hear the *gen*, the *gens* of *Je/Nous*, or the genus, genres and genders of an undecidable I/We. Our secret place, our wish word, would reside in the flexion of a knee, or two, *genoux*, perhaps a *faire du genoux à quelle* or an *être sur les genoux* — the last man or last metaphysician rubbing his metaphysical flexion against the non-metaphysical. Surely there is here the madness of the day, astride Blanchot’s silhouette of the Law in her knee’s contact that would be his (at least) impossible community of the I/We.

# Gordon Matta-Clark's *anarchitecture*



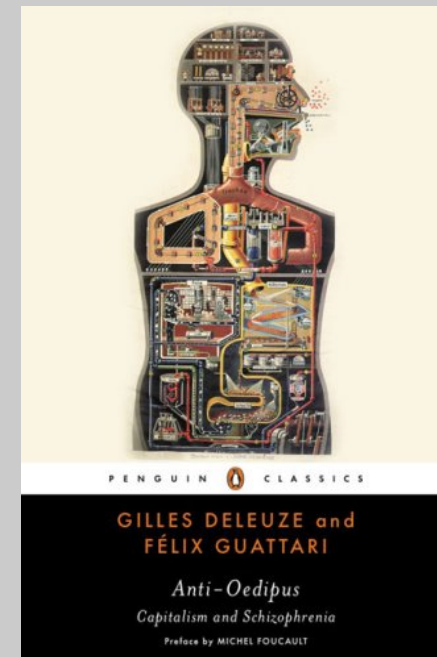
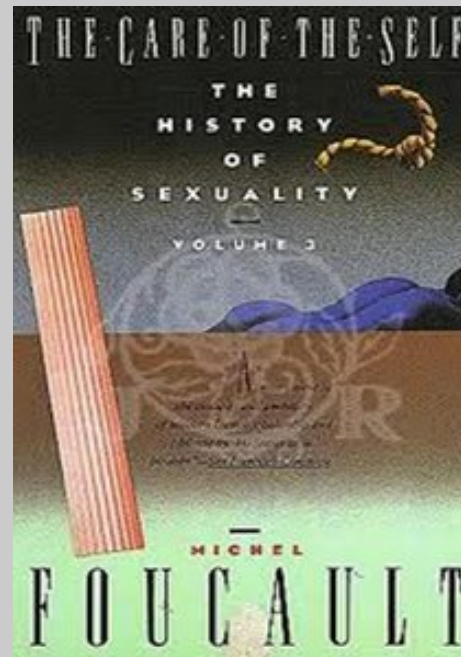
Gordon Matta-Clark, *Window Blowout* 1976, Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, N.Y.



Photograph from *Anarchitecture* 1974  
Estate of Gordon Matta-Clark.  
© ARS, NY and DACS, London, 2007

# Part Two

Ethics (care) for the sake of maintaining creative  
relevance



# POST POSTGRAD GRAD

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<sup>1</sup> Level of study taken after the successful completion of undergraduate programme of study. Postgraduate programmes of study include Honours, Masters, MPhil and PhD.

Postgraduate study in Spatial Design seeks to challenge and transform relationships between people and their environments, enabling dynamic manipulation of spaces that respond in a progressive manner to contemporary issues. Spatial Design focuses on emerging spatial practices operating at the intersection of architecture, art, design and technology.

Our postgraduate research-pedagogy nexus is informed through a range of contemporary critical spatial practices, which emerge through teaching and industry experience. This nexus is formalized through a series of Spatial Design research clusters that consolidate staff and student research foci. Our current postgraduate research clusters are: *Between Art + Architecture*, *Proximate Urbanism*, *Haptic Environments* and *Māori + Oceanic Space*. Each cluster supports lines of enquiry into the complexities of the production and experiential encounters of space. These expanding research frameworks read in relation to each other. They construe a shifting terrain activated by a series of intersections and boundaries for our continual exploration and invention as a collective of spatial researchers formed in relation to our own critical and contemporary practices.

Our Postgraduate programmes provide an opportunity for graduates in Spatial Design or related disciplines to undertake an advanced year (Honours) or years (Masters, MPhil and PhD) of professional training with particular focus on the development of design practices in an environment that gives emphasis to research, critical thinking and experimentation.

*Dr Maria O'Connor*

Spatial Design Postgraduate Leader

# PART THREE

The Politics of difference as an approach (aka methodology) for research

A few Key Terms:

-*Schizoanalysis (Deleuze+Guattari)*

-*Delerium*

-*Rhizomatic*

-*Ego-Loss*

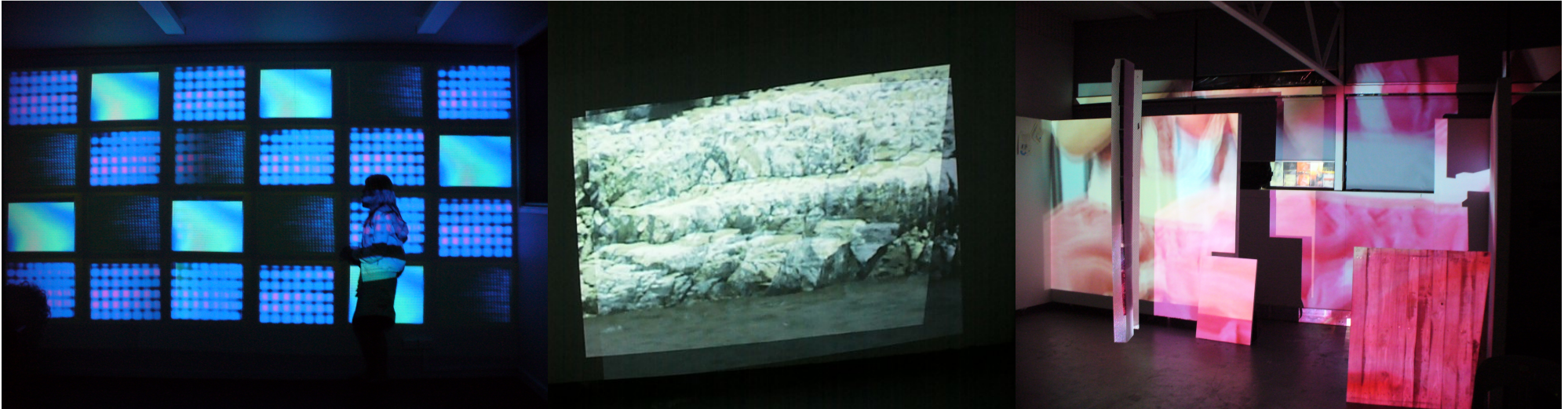
-*Listening for otherness*

-*Tracing our desire*

-*Sensate over Rational*

-*Reflectivity*

# Sara Romano's 'Is/Land Life'



## **Is/Land Life: The fluidity of dislocation as an experience of transnational identity in moving images**

This research project concerns itself with a paradoxical experience of dislocation as a consistent experience of belonging through the increasing global phenomenon known as *transnationalism*. Central to this sense of non-belonging/belonging are the temporal mediums of film and video. They are key signifiers for locating my own familial connection to place through a family's process of archiving stories through moving image. The paradoxical nature of this project suggests that it is through movement (moving image, moving homes) that an ontological experience of being "situated" is discovered. The project questions whether others who experience dislocation (whether they be termed transnationals or not), experience also a sense of belonging through the medium of the moving image archive.

This project employs or appropriates existing archival family footage that has been shot in various locations that have been established as my 'home' at one time or another. It is layered with contemporary footage that I have recently shot to add a complexity around the question of location in relation to past, present and future situatedness. This work takes up the motif of the island as a topological and allegorical figure. It does so because three locations that establish my trajectory of home-life have been islands. Further, the island acts allegorically as both a figure of ubiquity whereby islands are generally those spaces that signify floating lives, somehow resort/ing to a life disconnected from the proper flows of larger contemporary and continental progressive living. The Island for me becomes an establishing motif governed by water that surrounds it. Its milieu is water and in this sense the fluidity of this condition marks the paradoxical moment of my stability as consistency. Language becomes a key inscriptive device in the moving image installation, whereby there exists the hybrid and crypto languages of Serbo-Croatian and English that give me my markers of identity.

# Eloise Coveny 'The Moving Still'



Figure 79:  
Eloise Coveny, *The Moving Still*, 2008.  
Still Photograph of *The Moving Still* in the Graduating Exhibition, 2008



Figure 80:  
Eloise Coveny, *The Moving Still*, 2008.  
Still Photograph of *The Moving Still* in the Graduating Exhibition, 2008

# REFERENCES

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119-169.

Matta-Clark, Gordon .....

# *Desiccations*

11-minute experimental film for *Sexuate Subjects* conference, Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL,  
London, December 3-6<sup>th</sup> 2010