

THE CONFIGURATIONAL ENCOUNTER AND THE PROBLEMATIC OF BEHOLDING

Chapter Five

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If postconceptual art presents a crisis for critical judgement, does this thereby negate Bourdieu's critique of taste? Certainly, any Greenbergian notion of the aesthetic couched in terms of medium specificity or the autonomous art object would seem redundant faced with the proliferation of trans-categorical possibilities for making art. But rather than abandon the aesthetic, I draw upon Wolfgang Iser's notion of the 'blank' - as a staged suspension of connectivity - to argue for a reassignment of the aesthetic in terms of an encounter conceived as a configurational interplay that problematises the beholder's bodily and ideological orientation toward the artwork.

1.

In *Distinction* (Bourdieu 1984 [1979]), Bourdieu explicitly confronts Kant's notion of the aesthetic as a universally valid principle: one where the rarified 'taste of reflection' is separated from the mere 'taste of sense', and 'pure pleasure' distinguished from 'facile pleasure' (Bourdieu 1984 [1979]: 5). Bourdieu seeks to dispel any notion that taste, as an acquired disposition to 'differentiate' and 'appreciate', is other than the product of social forces: a manifestation of 'cultural capital' embodied within an educated elite, operating within (and structured by) a defined social arena, or 'field'. As Bourdieu claims in the book's introduction, it is the task of sociology 'to establish the conditions in which the consumers of cultural goods, and taste for them, are produced' (Bourdieu 1984 [1979]: 1).

This relation between taste and domination, however, is not a simple causal model. Rather, as Tom Huhn has noted, Bourdieu 'instead regards taste and the objects it valorizes as epiphenomenal symbols of a total system, which precisely *as symbols* implicitly legitimize domination' (Huhn 1996: 88). Here durable dispositions are internalised, a process of incorporation that presupposes embodiment and guarantees the correctness and constancy of practices. In its embodied state, this 'habitus' (a term appropriated to describe a system of acquired dispositions) constitutes a form of cultural capital, 'linked in numerous ways to the person in his biological singularity' (Bourdieu 1986: 245). As a 'structured' and 'structuring structure', habitus thus conceptualises the relation between a subjective 'inner' and a socialised 'outer' (Bourdieu 1977: 72).

With respect to the taste for the visual arts, Bourdieu is highly critical of any notion of the pure gaze; rather, he describes the 'conscious or unconscious implementation of explicit or implicit schemes of perception and appreciation' (Bourdieu 1984 [1979]: 2) necessary for deciphering or decoding works of high art. Aesthetic taste thus operates as a form of social orientation, exemplified in the body of the art critic who canonises approved works. Bourdieu here coopts many of Clement Greenberg's critical terms. Bourdieu intimately ties schemes of perception to the Greenbergian ideal

of the autonomous artwork, such that for both critic and sociologist modernism is seen as the culmination of successive stages of artistic autonomy:

The pure intention of the artist is that of a producer who aims to be autonomous, that is, entirely the master of his product, who tends to reject not only the 'programmes' imposed a priori by scholars and scribes, but also - following the old hierarchy of doing and saying - the interpretations superimposed a posteriori on his work. The production of an 'open work', intrinsically and deliberately polysemic, can thus be understood as the final stage in the conquest of artistic autonomy by poets and, following in their footsteps, by painters, who had long been reliant on writers and their work of 'showing' and 'illustrating'. (Bourdieu 1984 [1979]: 4)

Bourdieu categorises modernism as a self-relational, autonomous art in which the discerning and disembodied eye is attentive to subtle differentiations of the marked surface.

Nevertheless, this disinterested Kantian aesthetic model had, by 1979, long been subverted from *within* the world of art. Pop art in the 1950s and 1960s had consistently challenged received notions of taste; more significantly, the development of minimalist and conceptual art in the 1960s and 1970s constituted a paradigm shift in possibilities for making art, and in so doing presented a crisis for critical judgement. In retrospect, Michael Fried's notorious attack on minimalism in his 1967 essay 'Art and Objecthood' (Fried 1998 [1967]) was by no means an overreaction to the perceived threat of 'literalist' art. As Fried was all too aware, the stakes were, indeed, high. The kind of 'distanced' aesthetic experience of the autonomous artwork, where the work is grasped in its single self-relational whole, was no longer applicable to situational art. So-called 'literalist' art (Fried 1998 [1967]) - a durational art that acknowledged the beholder as a bodily presence - threatened the autonomous status of the artwork, its self-contained nature, and the sanctity of discrete mediums. Moreover, it threatened precisely the kind of disinterested Kantian aesthetic that Bourdieu condemned as characterising the art of a privileged social elite.

2.

Does this historic shift thereby render Bourdieu's critique superfluous to the contemporary situation? Does postconceptual art remove itself from aesthetic considerations, such that the kind of judgments of taste associated with the acquisition of cultural capital are no longer relevant?

Peter Osborne argues something along these lines. In his book *Anywhere Or Not At All* (2013), Osborne contends that the 'campaign against a certain "aesthetic" institution of spectatorship ... so fundamentally transformed the field of practices institutionally recognized as "art" ... as to constitute a change in art's "ontology" or very mode of being. The new, postconceptual artistic ontology that was established - "beyond aesthetic" - came to define the field to which the phrase "contemporary art" most appropriately refers, in its deepest critical sense' (Osborne 2013: 37). According to Osborne, aesthetics, and more widely the philosophy of art, has been found wanting in terms of meeting the challenges of a transmedia or postconceptual art: '[t]here has been an inability to grasp contemporary

art philosophically in its contemporaneity and hence its decisive difference from art of the past' (Osborne 2013: 8).

Is postconceptual art therefore non- or, indeed, anti-aesthetic? Certainly, it is if we conceive of aesthetics narrowly in terms of Kant's formalist theory of art in the 'Critique of Aesthetic Judgement', Part One of the *Critique of Judgement* (1987 [1790]). Osborne is unequivocal: 'There is no critically relevant pure "aesthetics" of contemporary art, because contemporary art is not an aesthetic art in any philosophically significant sense of the term' (Osborne 2013: 10). By contrast, some philosophers, such as Dairmuid Costello (2013), attempt to defuse such antipathy to aesthetics in contemporary art theory by accommodating a variety of supposedly anti-aesthetic artforms within the remit of an enriched Kantian aesthetic theory. Costello maintains critiques of Kant's perceptual formalism are understandable, but partial because they ignore that 'our experience of works of art as works of art is conceptually inflected *by definition* on Kant's account' (Costello 2013: 287); while, for Kant, aesthetic judgements are non-subsumptive, i.e. they cannot be subsumed by 'concepts in virtue of exhibiting the relevant traits'. Kant also insists that 'when we judge anything as art we must be *aware that* it is art we are judging' (Costello 2013: 287). In other words, 'to judge something as art one must judge it relative to both (1) the concept "art" and (2) whatever one takes the work in question to be meant to be or be about' (Costello 2013: 288).

While sympathetic to Costello's position, this chapter's concern is not to accommodate conceptual art within a suitably enriched Kantian aesthetic; rather, I will attempt to shift the ground for an aesthetic experience of at least some significant forms of contemporary art from the judgement of aesthetic properties to a situated 'encounter' conceived as a structured performance - *one inflected by definition*. This encounter, I claim, foregrounds configurational properties of the artwork's production and reception. It reveals material processes, rules, instructions or appropriations, and/or its situated reception and apparatus of display. But this reflexivity is not an end in itself. By problematising the embodied and dispositional orientation of beholders towards the work, the configurational encounter can, and in the most interesting case does, evoke the artwork's wider associational penumbra: an associational shadow that Paul Crowther has termed conceptual art's 'configurational image' (Crowther 2002: 181).

3.

In constructing this argument, I want to engage something of the reception aesthetics of Wolfgang Iser, best known for developing the phenomenological concept of the implied reader (Iser 1978). Iser's concern is the reciprocity between text and reader, the structure and its recipient, such that the reading process is a dynamic *interaction* between text and reader (Iser 1978: 107). Indeed, Iser's emphasis on the reader entangled in a situation constitutes what is more accurately described as a theory of aesthetic response (*Wirkungstheorie*), brought about by the text, and engaging 'the imaginative and perceptive faculties of the reader, in order to make him adjust and even differentiate his own focus' (Iser 1978: x).

Despite the considerable influence of the aesthetics of reception on literary studies in the late 1970s and the 1980s, there have been few attempts to apply such an approach to the visual arts, and fewer still to contemporary art (Kemp 1998). And yet an aesthetics of response potentially offers a model for the reassignment of the aesthetic in contemporary visual art. As such, I touch upon three related aspects of Iser's thesis. Firstly, his notion of the constitutive 'blank', which he conceives as a deliberate suspension of connectivity between work and reader, radicalising the idea of the intermediate realm. Secondly, the idea of 'negativity' as an enabling structure and productive matrix. And thirdly, in Section 5, Iser's challenge to J. L. Austin (1975) and John R. Searle's (1979) argument that with fictional language illocutionary force is simply 'bracketed', 'parasitic' on ordinary speech (Iser 1978; 1989).

Arguably, Iser offers an important corrective to Bourdieu's sociological critique of the aesthetic, which at its most pessimistic equates artistic creativity exclusively with the struggle for recognition. Bourdieu's categorisation of reflexivity as an 'almost perfect circularity and reversibility of the relations of cultural production and consumption' describes a closed field of restricted production that enables 'the development of symbolic production to take on the form of an almost reflexive history' (Bourdieu 1993a: 118). For Bourdieu, meaning is determined by the positions of agents within the closed structure of the field of restricted production. Indeed, Bourdieu claims that successive schools or groups are essentially mere 'products in the *struggle for recognition* by the artists themselves or by their appointed critics' (Bourdieu 1995: 157). This overly deterministic approach not only denies the potential to challenge hegemonic modes of making art, but rules out those rare paradigmatic changes that open up radical new possibilities for making art at a structural level. Moreover, as Jacques Rancière contends, this sociological account of agents renders the spectator aesthetically and politically passive (Rancière 2009), an 'ignorant' onlooker unable to comprehend either the processes of production or the artwork's relation to reality.ⁱ

One might trace a shift in Iser's approach from a theory of aesthetic response, in his *The Act of Reading* (1978), to a more literary anthropological turn in the later writing. In Iser's *Prospecting: From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology* (1989), representation, re-conceived as an act of performing, is freed from any association with mimesis, whereby Iser states it brings forth 'in the mode of staging something that in itself is not given' (Iser 1989: 248). What it brings forth is a virtualisation of communicative relations. As the prominent Iser scholar Wolfgang Fluck (2000) notes, sharing aspects of Adorno's definition of negativity, the literary text, for Iser, is not only conditioned by blanks and negations (and turned into an aesthetic experience by negativity), but can never be identical with the real. In other words, representation opens up a liminal space which oscillates between the real and imaginary, as we are forced to confront both that which is said and that which is not said (the situation the text seeks to negate). This unwritten 'double' conditions our responses to the formulated text, providing an unformulated background against which the written transcends its literal meaning (Iser 1978: 225). Iser thus adopts a Husserlian characterisation of negation as not only a

superimposition, but requiring a *motivation* for such a negation - where new meaning sits above the negated one, in conflict with it. As Fluck puts it:

[O]ur acts of imagining do not automatically possess an aesthetic quality. For Iser, such an aesthetic quality is created only when the imagined objects are deformed, negated, or delegitimated in their validity, because such negation also challenges us to imagine that which is negated. It does this in a double sense, for in order to make the negation meaningful we have to mentally construct not only the object or situation itself which appears in negation but also that which it negates. (Fluck 2000: 184)

Iser is therefore not proposing a theory of interpretation as such, where interpretation is conceived as a *construction* of meaning by the reader; neither does he contend that interpretation is intrinsically aesthetic. Interpretation is here conceived as 'not so much an explication but a performance: it makes something happen' (Iser 2000: xiv). Each act of interpretation opens up an indeterminate realm that is not only intrinsically problematic, but impels us to bridge that which is dissociated. Unlike Adorno's tethering of negativity to a particular historical situation, that of post Auschwitz art, for Iser 'negativity becomes a prerequisite for the articulation of something that is otherwise not accessible, or indeed is "unsayable"' (Fluck 2000: 187). The gap is no longer the ideologically instructive omission of avant-garde literature but a radical incompleteness that requires not only the reader's act of ideation, but the act of imagining something that is not there. Negativity is transformed from a means of resistance to an enabling structure. While developed in relation to literature, this has particular relevance to the indeterminacies of conceptual and postconceptual art.

4.

Let me develop this argument in relation to an early precedent for conceptual art, Robert Rauschenberg's sanctioned erasure of a Willem de Kooning drawing, entitled *Erased de Kooning Drawing* (1953). Founded on the erasure rather than the accumulation of marks, this is a work that brings out parallels and differences in Bourdieu and Iser's respective approaches. Importantly, the title is necessary to understand the work *as* negation, while the resulting significance (in Bourdieu's terms, its struggle for recognition) is dependent upon extra-pictorial recognition of de Kooning's status as an artist (perhaps reinforced by knowledge of his reluctance to provide Rauschenberg with a work). Rauschenberg here pushes at the limits of what constitutes a work of art, taking as his starting point an act that is, in itself, intrinsic to the creative process. We imagine the work that has been negated in a double sense: not only do we attempt to 'see' de Kooning's drawing within the paltry marks that remain, but we are aware that the work itself represents a generational challenge to abstract expressionism, shifting the aesthetic status from the engagement with medium of this autonomous work, to the encounter with a work as idea.

In Bourdieu's terms, this represents a consecrated act of distinction, an axiomatic rupture with Rauschenberg's antecedents. Yet if we imagine not only the object itself which appears in negation, but the wider situation which it seeks to negate, the work opens up an associational penumbra that

engages iconoclasm: literally, in terms of the destruction of a cherished image, and in an extended political sense, as an explicit assault on a set of entrenched art institutional beliefs, values, and painting practices. This is not a nuanced exploration of 'influence', in Greenbergian terms, but a performance that reclaims the aesthetic as a performative act of erasure, heralding a shift in the ontology of art. Acts of ideation supplant intuitive taste, but as we have seen these are not without a role for the imagination (both sensory and propositional) in that we are obliged to mentally construct not only Rauschenberg's process of erasure, but also that which is erased.

5.

I believe such an example suggests one way that Iser's concept of the blank, as a rewriting of the idea of negation in phenomenological terms, might be applied to conceptual and postconceptual art. But I think we can go further here in relation to how the configurational encounter constructs a tension between the self-sufficient *propositional* claims of such art and the imaginatively enacted aesthetic encounter that oscillates between the real and 'irreal'.ⁱⁱ The most prominent advocate of the propositional and cognitive basis of art is Joseph Kosuth, who not only (in his writing, if not the work) renounces aesthetic ambitions but challenges the role of art. Drawing upon the philosopher A. J. Ayer, Kosuth takes on Kant's distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions. He states:

Works of art are analytic propositions. That is, viewed within their context – as art – they provide no information what-so-ever about any matter of fact. A work of art is a tautology in that it is a presentation of the artist's intention, that is, he is saying that a particular work of art is art, which means, is a *definition* of art. Thus, that it is art is true *a priori* (which is what Judd means when he states that 'if someone calls it art, it's art'). (Kosuth 2002 [1969]: 232)

Thus, Kosuth's 1965 *Five Words in Green Neon* is, literally, five words written in green neon. Likewise, his seminal piece *One and Three Chairs* (1965) assembles three signs of a chair: a 'real' chair, a full size photographic representation of the same chair, and a dictionary definition of the word 'chair.' With Kosuth, the work is not only inflected by definition, but the very notion of 'definition' is itself taken as being core to the artistic practice.

Nevertheless, even here aspects of the metaphysical intrude as we are forced to confront the status of the 'real' chair relative to its representations through image and text. And, of course, chairs, photographs of chairs and dictionaries are also full of associations, as Kosuth well knows, such that he exploits the unresolvable gaps in meaning between each element. Nonetheless, one might contrast Kosuth's tautological application to related artworks that arguably open up an even wider associational shadow, problematising the spectator's position. With this in mind, the following, chosen from a wide range of possible examples, reveal an oscillation between the 'bracketed' (or virtual) work and the real situation in such a way that goes beyond the definition of art to encompass a certain culpability on the behalf of the beholder.

Amikam Toren's *Neither a painting nor a chair* (1979-80) likewise enacts a tautological negation. The installation comprises a pared-down chair, whittled away to a 'skeletal' form (no longer a functional chair), and ten cropped life-sized 'representations' of the same seat in its unadulterated form. These are rendered using the pulped material shaved from the wooden chair. In other words, in a reflexive gesture the very material of the chair - the sawdust mixed with a binding agent - has been used to make the object's own representation. Seven of the 'paintings' utilise tones of brownish colour to alternate figure and ground, whereas the final three depict a black chair on a light grey background. These turn out to have been rendered using the ash of failed attempts which were subsequently burnt. The associational shadow arises from processes internal to the work's genesis and the history of its fabrication.

In a reflexive gesture, Toren self-consciously employs craft skills associated with mimetic representational arts - carving and painting. That less material is carved from the wooden joints, ostensibly to ensure the chair's structural viability, gives the chair an extraordinary fragility, imparting a poignancy to the installation - a loss of functionality at odds to the robustness of the representations of the object in its undefiled original wholeness. An anthropomorphism intrudes here; mental images of emaciated victims of the death camps force their way onto our projections onto the artwork despite (it must to be said) the stated intentions of the artist. Here, the aesthetic encounter oscillates between reference and negation, the blank (the unsayable or un-representable) and its suspended relations.

Yoko Ono's 1964 performance *Cut Piece* stages a 'virtual' event in such a way that the content, while not entirely predictable, is likewise structured by the work's original premise - that spectators be invited to cut away Ono's clothes. Ono's performance, while framed by the outwardly neutral rules of its configurational encounter, reveals underlying gender disparities. A number of men in the audience became increasingly sexually aggressive in removing the clothing of the young performer, to the point where the artist, while orchestrator of the event, was left semi-naked and vulnerable. Even when viewed in documentary footage, the viewer is uncomfortably implicated in ways that make explicit modes of male dominance, the 'staging' disturbingly disclosing aspects of the real extrinsic to the work's instructions but which nevertheless intrude upon the work's meaning. Indeed, the power of Ono's performance is precisely that it forcibly reminds us that in such circumstances illocutionary force, while framed, is decidedly not suspended.

In Iser's terms, one might state that representation is here recast not as mimesis (the participants are not playing a role), but as a performative act. For Iser, aesthetic semblance 'neither transcends a given reality nor mediates between idea and manifestation; it is an indication that the inaccessible can only be approached by being staged' (Iser 1989: 243). As such, Iser refutes the proposition that with fiction (or, by extension, the works we have been considering) illocutionary force is necessarily 'bracketed', because it cannot invoke conventions or accepted procedures. Whereas fiction, for Searle and Austin, is 'parasitic', implying that it is pseudo-real, Iser contends:

[S]peech acts, as long as they are considered to be performatives, actually produce reality. If speech acts are able to produce realities, one could just as well say that fictions are not parasitic in relation to reality. Rather, by intervening into reality they also produce realities - just as a lie produces realities. (Iser, quoted in van Oort 1997/98)

Here, fictional language is not devoid of reality, but engages conventions differently from ordinary performative utterances. It does so by 'selecting' conventions, and then constructing them 'horizontally', whereby, deprived of their situational context and regulatory capacity, they in themselves become subjects for scrutiny. Crucially, Iser claims that the 'iconic signs of literature constitute an organisation of signifiers which do not serve to designate a signified object, but instead designate *instructions* for the *production* of the signified' (Iser 1978: 65). The instructions compel the reader to find connections and relations for what is intentionally disconnected, through acts of ideation which are constrained by the text. 'The aesthetic semblance can only take on its form by way of the recipient's ideational, performative activity, and so representation can only come to full fruition in the recipient's imagination; it is the recipient's performance that endows the semblance with its sense of reality' (Iser 1989: 243).

Though developed in relation to certain forms of avant-garde literature to which Iser is drawn, this notion of designating '*instructions* for the *production* of the signified' has direct relevance to the aesthetic encounter afforded certain forms of contemporary art. Works such as those by Toren and Ono stage a 'virtualised' realm that while removed from any functional imperative, compel the beholder to acts of ideation that reveal the work's configurational instructions for production and reception. Bringing our orientation into play, this problematises our embodied dispositions in ways that implicate ourselves within the social relations revealed. While this undoubtedly has ethical as well as aesthetic dimensions, such perspective shifting necessitates an imaginative engagement with ideas through associative play: i.e. a coming to 'fruition in the recipient's imagination' (Iser 1989: 243) that directly references Kant's definition of an *aesthetic idea* (Kant 1987 [1790]: § 49, 183-4).

6.

I conclude with a consideration of Bruce Nauman's *Anthro/Socio (Rinde Spinning)* (1992). First shown at 'Documenta 9', in Kassel, Germany. As a work that intrinsically demands acts of position-taking, it is an appropriate piece to reflect upon whether my claims for the configurational encounter might be reconciled with Bourdieu's account.

Throughout his expansive oeuvre, Nauman's performative utterances establish deictic references that implicate the beholder. Neon works such as *One Hundred Live and Die* (1984) explicitly reference the primitive language games of Wittgenstein, as outlined in his *Philosophical Investigations* (Wittgenstein 2001 [1953]). Consistent with his wide use of directive or imperative verbs, Nauman presents a grid of one hundred variations containing the words 'live' or 'die': 'Live and Die. Die and

Die. Shit and Die. Piss and Die ...'. As Janet Kraynak writes in her introduction to *Please Pat Attention Please: Bruce Nauman's Words* (2003):

the linguistic urgency of the proverbial pointing finger, calling out to 'YOU', is realized through the use of directive verbs indicating 'you pay attention; 'you piss and die'. In fact, throughout Nauman's practice, statements of address, assertions, demands, and commands abound, a verbal play so ubiquitous that it cannot be mere coincidental. (Nauman 2003: 23)

Nauman's use of words, however, also feels remarkably close to Iser's notion of 'play' through textual games, where free play and instrumental play combine to construct a tension between openness and closure (Iser 1989: ch. 12). Not surprisingly, both Iser's theoretical position and Nauman's language games are heavily influenced by Samuel Beckett.

Operating in a kind of shifting ground between the conceptual and the physical sign, *Anthro/Socio (Rinde Spinning)* spatially situates this language, demanding something of the beholder even as she is physically and psychologically manipulated by the work. The disembodied and spinning heads exhort 'Feed me/Eat me: Anthropology ... Help me/Hurt me: Sociology'. This is a work that at one and the same time elicits but irrevocably complicates empathy. Three video projections and six monitors are spatially distributed throughout the space, such that one is surrounded by images (some inverted), immersed in a cacophony of sounds emanating from the constantly rotating heads directly imploring the viewer to intervene. Should we really be watching this, and what are we to make of these ambiguous pleas, delivered like incantations by the performance artist Rinde Eckert? Unwittingly, we become embroiled in a profoundly unsettling and disorientating situation that confounds our attempts to orientate ourselves toward this upside-down world and its impossible demands.

In the introduction to her book *Un/common Cultures* (2010), Kamala Visweswaran writes:

It seems impossible to imagine even disciplinary knowledge without the intercession of the media form. For Nauman stages a reflection not only on the mass-mediated forms of culture, but also on the mass-mediated explanations of culture that announce themselves as anthropology and sociology. Nauman's deft use of parody reduces disciplinary organicisms like 'culture' or 'society' to Durkheimian or Lévi-Straussian functions: feed:eat :: help:hurt. It is as if the disciplines, as a paradoxical success of their mass mediation, had doubled back on themselves, yielding productive and populist displacements of their central concepts. (Visweswaran 2010: 1)

This notion of doubling is precisely how Iser defines the aesthetic encounter of literature. As noted earlier, we have to construct mentally not only the situation of the artwork, which also itself appears in negation through what is left unsaid, but also the situation that has been transplanted, and thus which is negated. 'The one discourse becomes the theme viewed from the standpoint of the other, and vice versa' (Iser 1989: 237). As Iser writes:

Every word becomes dialogic, and every semantic field is doubled by another. Through this double-voiced discourse every utterance carries something else in its wake, so that the act of combination give rises to duplication of what is present by that which is absent - a process that often results in the balance being reversed and the present serving only to spotlight the absent. Thus what is said ceases to mean itself, and instead enables what is not said to become present. The double meaning engendered by the act of combination opens up a multifariousness of interconnections within the text. (Iser 1989: 238)

Literature thus constructs a complex web of relations, involving the switching of perspectives on the part of the implied reader, that invokes and simultaneously deforms 'extratextual fields of reference, thereby given rise to the aesthetic quality', whereas through 'inscribing the absent into the present' the act of combination 'becomes the matrix of that aesthetic quality' (Iser 1989: 238). This provides a 'continual oscillation between the bracketed world [of the fiction] and that which it has been separated [the actual world]' (Iser 1989: 239).

Nauman also provides an oscillation between the 'bracketed' world of the installation, and that from which it has been separated, the world outside. But like the spinning heads, there is no resolution or cessation. Surrounded by the rotating images and disembodied sounds, even after a relatively short period of time the arrhythmic voices really do get *inside your head*. This hellish virtual realm, a place outside of normal time and space, is nevertheless strangely familiar, and internalised. Yet the work is *not* just about the experience. This is an encounter where the structuring mechanism is explicitly 'staged', but opens up a space where the real and unreal are doubled up. Through its impossible demands on the audience, Nauman's work requires acts of ideation and imagination in bringing forward something that is not given, in a dialectical interplay between the sensory demands of the work and our mental projections, between reference and negation. Despite extrinsically appearing to be an assault on what Kant calls the aesthetic, we might here reallocate the aesthetic from intrinsic qualities to be extracted from the work to an associative play of the faculties exceeding the bounds of sensible form - an imaginative encounter, opened up by the virtual space of the installation, which is arguably compatible with Kant's notion of the aesthetic idea (Costello 2013).

Can this be reconciled with Bourdieu's position? It has been my claim that the configurational encounter discloses aspects of our embodied orientation towards the world, and thus our embodied dispositions or habitus. Might we here reconfigure Bourdieu's notion of the aesthetic as a form of social orientation to one that, rather than embodying 'taste', critically reflects upon our bodily orientation towards the situation the artwork opens up (one situated in social space and historical time). This encounter does not seek to escape our embodied dispositions (the false promise of the aesthetic encounter), but on the contrary embeds them into a reciprocal exchange with a real, though bracketed situation, thus problematising our orientation towards the work in question.

Bourdieu grants something of this encounter in the case of Flaubert, where scientific 'analyses seems to abolish the singularity of the "creator" in favour of the relations which made the work intelligible' (1995: xix). Flaubert offers a mental identification with a constructed position, such that:

One feels that Flaubert is wholly there, in this universe of relationships that would have to be explored one by one, in their double dimension, both artistic and social, and that he nevertheless remains irreducibly beyond it: is this not because the active integration that he effects implies an overcoming? In situating himself, as it were, at the geometric intersection of all perspectives, which is also the point of greatest tension, he forces himself in some fashion to raise to their highest intensity the set of questions posed in the field, to play out all the resources inscribed in the space of possibles that, in the manner of a language or a musical instrument, is offered to each writer, like an infinite universe of possible combinations locked in a potential state within the finite system of constraints. (Bourdieu 1995: 100)

Far from being 'beyond' the aesthetic, one might thus claim that the aesthetic emerges from the oscillation of perspective switches (spatial *and* ideational) resulting from a calculated problematising of the beholder's position-taking. With the notion of the aesthetic thus reconfigured, I believe it is to Bourdieu's wider writing on the embodiment of cultural capital that we must turn, rather than his critique of the judgment of taste.

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ⁱ For Rancière, Bourdieu refuses the possibility of aesthetic expression as a mode of political resistance (Rancière 2004 [2004]). Derek Robbins, however, has defended Bourdieu, claiming that Rancière has 'misrepresented the character of Bourdieu's sociological work by failing to recognize the underlying phenomenological orientation of his thinking' (Robbins 2015: 738).

ⁱⁱ Like Fluck (2000: 190, 207), I adopt the literal translation of Iser's use of the German 'irrealisiert' in order to distinguish such a term from the misleading 'unreal'.