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Projection between Exhibition and Information

Experimental and Artists' Films at *Sonsbeek 71*

Adeena Mey

'Beyond the Pale': The Exhibition as Informational Infrastructure

Originally an outdoor sculpture exhibition in the Dutch town of Arnhem, the 1971 edition of *Sonsbeek* was curated in a spirit of rupture. Not only was *Sonsbeek 71* conceived as breaking away from the conventional format of an open-air sculpture show by bringing together sculpture with land art, conceptual art, and artists' moving images, but it also literally went 'beyond the pale' (or *buiten de perken* in Dutch), as its subtitle had it. And as the exhibition's curator, Wim Beeren, put it even more bombastically, *Sonsbeek 71* was to take 'the entire country as field of operation' (Beeren 1971, 11). In addition to works scattered across Holland, Beeren's vision conceived of the country less as a geophysical landscape than as a network of cities and sites interconnected through telecommunication media. Also, as part of this radical reconfiguration of the exhibition apparatus as a whole, the inclusion of experimental film works by way of specifically designed projection and viewing infrastructures lay at a critical junction in Beeren's project. On the one hand, his ambition to transgress the limits of the exhibition led him to operate on the whole land and conceive it as the (exhibition) medium itself, while, on the other, by redefining the latter altogether, that very concept was to become obsolete through its replacement by the curator's emphasis on the concept of 'activity'.

In this regard, the shift from the exhibition conceived as a site of display to one defined as a set of activities, underpinned by information theory-driven concepts, performed an epistemology of the exhibition, *Sonsbeek 71* (self-)

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reflecting on the very epistemological foundations of the exhibition form. Or, to put it more precisely, its conceptualization as a medium through communication and information discourses, as well as the new environments it created through a reticulation of its infrastructural, spatial, and informational elements, articulated an epistemology of the exhibition, destabilising or even 'denaturalising' the conception of a generic apparatus—the white cube—conceived as an enclosed space governing subjects and objects, predicated on the idea of an autonomous and rational self. With *Sonsbeek 71* Wim Beeren not only envisioned an exhibition format liberated from spatial and physical constraints, or supposedly so, but redefined the public reception of artworks not as aesthetic contemplation or dwelling but instead as access to information. Not only was *Sonsbeek 71* traversed by the theme of 'spatial relations' but, as Beeren put it in his catalogue essay entitled 'From Exhibition to Activity':

> It has become one of Sonsbeek's aims to stimulate a greater public in the awareness that such things as visual phenomena exist, and that those phenomena often concern space. Until recently those visual phenomena were confined to the realm of science or to the grounds of the museums. But now the time has come that artists are deeply involved in those spatial relations, and the attention they pay to it has long since ceased to be expressed in mass alone. Spatial relations means also: to be involved. (Beeren 1971, 11)

In the curator's formulation, these 'spatial relations' were of several kinds. First, they could refer to the topological network formed through the connection between the various participating cities, each hosting specific projects as part of the exhibition. In this regard, the main site of Arnhem became a broadcast and reception station of sorts, the main node through which ongoing information about the event circulated. Second, following Beeren, the (supposedly) lack of traditional institutional (scientific or museological) frame shifted the mediating role of the exhibition apparatus—understood as the material, discursive, and semiotic arrangement governing the mediations between the viewing subject, institutional space, sensory experience, and knowledge—to the 'involvement' of the artists. Moreover, given the nationwide scale of the show, visitors were expected to travel the country to engage with the many site-specific works produced for the occasion and with which *Sonsbeek 71* has since been associated. In sum, by framing *Sonsbeek 71* not as an exhibition but as a set of spatial relations, Beeren also pointed to limits in the traditional concept of the exhibition and of exhibition-making, arguing

in favour of the already-mentioned concept of activity. Indeed, as he put it in the catalogue:

> It is evident that the term exhibition is only partly relevant. We have turned to the word 'manifestation' and subsequently to 'activity'. *Sonsbeek 71* is more like a workshop than a show. This means the Dutch public will not be able to take a walk amongst impressive statues, but that it will have the opportunity of a much closer involvement. A project on the Groningen-mudflats cannot attract the masses (unless via the medium of film), but a project in a daily newspaper such as *De Volkskrant* or the *De Telegraaf* is a direct confrontation with Sonsbeek for hundreds of thousands of people. (Beeren 1971, 13)

If *Sonsbeek 71* stood as one the most audacious examples among the many reconfigurations and experiments with the medium of the exhibition the

Figure 13.1 Theo Botschuijver, Jeffrey Shaw and Sean Wellesley-Miller, *Information Pavilion,* Sonsbeek buiten de perken, Park Sonsbeek, Arnheim, Netherlands, 1971.
Source: (courtesy Jeffrey Shaw).

1960–1970s saw, it echoed other contemporary endeavours—not to mention Beeren's own previous projects, such as *Op Losse Schroeven* (1969), which has been compared to Harald Szeemann's seminal *When Attitudes Become Form* (1969)—engaged with the presentation of 'the new art' and the transformation of its institutional and material contexts.[1] Moreover, artists' and experimental films were included in the show so as to respond to the informational infrastructure of *Sonsbeek*'s 'activities' and were presented inside an inflatable structure referred to as the Conference Pavilion designed by the artists' collective Eventstructure Group (or ERG, comprising of Jeffrey Shaw, Theo Botschuijver, and Sean Wellesley-Miller). The Conference Pavilion was part of a series of three inflatable structures realized by the ERG (the two others being the Video Studio/Pavilion and the Information Pavilion) in which other forms of moving image or televisual media fulfilling both artistic and communicational or participatory intentions were presented.[2]

Sonsbeek 71 was traversed by series of tensions and was symptomatic of a crisis (and probably one of its epitome) in the conceptualization and production of contemporary art exhibitions of the time, hitting a nerve in the identity of exhibitions and their alleged natural tie to the institution of the museum. Indeed, *Sonsbeek* 71 was reflecting on the very foundations of the museum—if not plainly attacking them—as it was established in the nineteenth century, that is, based on a rationalist epistemology predicated on classification as a mode of accessing knowledge and its corollary form of subjectivity: a viewer of artefacts who at the same time was offered to the sight of others in her wandering through galleries. If it surely represented one of the most iconoclastic examples of anti-museum gesture as well as an utmost literal understanding and realization of a cybernetic and communicational conception of the exhibition medium, *Sonsbeek 71* must be read as part of a larger process of 'cybernetisation' (Mey 2018) of the art institution and the exhibition, increasingly conceived as an informational medium. Beyond their specificities and their singular ways of understanding and applying cybernetics, communication and information theories to their projects of museum and exhibition reforms,[3] all share the idea that until the 1960s, the museum was founded on the same conceptions it was in the nineteenth century. Nothing had changed except for the modern objects exhibited. This was a 'sightseeing-museum' dedicated to the cult of objects' (Pavie 1971, 58). Such a museum, Pontus Hultén deemed a 'conservatory, a place of contemplation where one could admire works from the past [which] had lost their primary functions (social, singular or sacred)'. Departing from similar observations as to the

need to break from the nineteenth-century model of the museum, curator Peter F. Althaus, director of the Basel Kunsthalle from 1968 to 1973, remarked that the 1960s rendered explicit the 'contradiction between the former elitist and hierarchical museum practice and the nascent notion of a revolutionary work of art' (1975, 127). And so, because of its traditional architectural setting, and its function to preserve and collect, confronted with the art of the 1960s, Althaus wondered whether curators (*conservateurs*) shouldn't 'simply renounce and proclaim museums, now, to be outside of museums?' (1975, 128). Althaus negotiated this paradox by way of his notion of an 'open museum' (*Das offene Museum*), conceived as a 'centre of information and communication' (1969, n.p.)[4] predicated upon a form of permeability between the museum and the city and an openness towards the flexible relationships between man and his environment (*Umwelt*). Also, Hultén's own formulation of the 'museum as a site of communication'[5] envisioned and culminated in the realization of the Centre Pompidou in Paris. Beeren's own formulation of the 'exhibition as activity' and its communicational underpinnings partook in this process of cybernetization of the art institution and of exhibitions, the latter becoming sites embodying a cybernetic epistemology. In addition to Beeren's, Hultén's, and Althaus' concepts, one could also mention Argentinian curator Jorge Glusberg's concept of the 'museum of communication', which explicitly referenced Marshall McLuhan by distinguishing 'hot' from 'cool' museums (Glusberg 1980),[6] or philosopher Vilém Flusser's proposal to reorganize biennials on a 'scientific basis', as 'open and fluid forms' and structured according to a 'communication structure' (Flusser 2013, 246–48). Each of the concepts forming this spectrum of information theory-driven museum and exhibition framings articulates particular epistemological conceptions of the exhibition, a cybernetic epistemology of the exhibition. Before I move to the place of the moving image and its exhibition at *Sonsbeek 71*, a brief excursus through epistemological matters is necessary. More specifically, it is on philosopher of science and epistemologist François Dagognet's definition of epistemology that I wish to focus on here. Indeed, his thought is most relevant, his study of the birth of museums having fostered his epistemology. In addition, as a self-proclaimed 'materiologist' for whom 'the idea germinates out of the basis of the material itself instead of imposing itself thereon' (cited in Debray 1996, 76), he attends to the intertwinements of materiality and meaning, making him a significant thinker with respect to current discussions about media materialities, especially media theorist Jussi Parikka's call for a 'new materialist aesthetics of geologically attuned media culture' (2015, 50).

François Dagognet and an Epistemology of Exhibitions

In a collection of essays entitled *Les outils de la reflexion: Epistémologie* (*The Tools of Thought: Epistemology*), François Dagognet sketched some of the parameters of what he calls the 'epistemological field' (1999, 17–26) and the mutual constitution between the various schools of philosophy of science and the dynamics of specific intellectual endeavours that concretize into scientific discoveries. In this regard, Dagognet's epistemology lies on a principle of relation and genesis, each problem calling in every instance for 'the reinvention of the neo-logic of invention' (1999, 22).[7] Dagognet further notes that 'the epistemologist must set to work, going back to the very problem itself, to the *apparatuses, primary documents, sketches, debates and controversies of a specific time, and to the milieu*, in order to sort things out' (1999, 23; my emphasis).

Moreover, the different strata at work in Dagognet's epistemological field have further been commented by Michel Foucault in his response addressed to a paper by Dagognet on the anatomist Georges Cuvier and the distinction between epistemological transformation and the truth or falsity of scientific claims suggested by Dagognet's analysis of Cuvier.[8] In his response, Foucault identifies a discipline he calls *epistemography*, that is, the description of the way discourses within a society at a given time have functioned and became institutionalized as scientific discourses. Furthermore, within epistemography, two levels can be distinguished: epistemonomic and epistemocritical. First, he calls epistemonomic the 'internal epistemological identifications and controls scientific discourses practiced on themselves' (Dagognet 1999, 229); second, epistemocritique consists in the analysis conducted in terms of truths and errors that asks of applied and institutionalized statements whether they are true or not. Finally, Foucault defines as *epistemological* the 'analysis of theoretical structures of a scientific discourse, the analysis of conceptual material, the analysis of the fields of application of these concepts and the rules governing the use of these concepts' (Dagognet 1999, 228–29).

Before returning to *Sonsbeek* 71 and a discussion of its film apparatuses, the operationality of this digression via Dagognet and Foucault's response for the study of exhibitions in relationship to current debates in media studies must be addressed. For Bruno Latour, Dagognet belongs to a hidden tradition of French philosophy that includes Bergson and Simondon, 'whose

ingenuity was able to see the mind (*l'esprit*) within matter' (Latour 2010, 11–31). Moreover, as a disciple of Gaston Bachelard and Georges Canguilhem and the continuator of the tradition of French historical epistemology, along with Simondon, he is credited for having reactualized Bachelard's 'precise description and careful analysis of the material aspects of science', as well as ushering an interest in the concrete aspects of machines and technology (Brenner et al. 2009, 11). What he named materiology does not consist only in emphasizing the physicality of matter but is conceived as 'forces going through very subtle processes' echoing contemporary new-materialist positions such as Jussi Parikka's, for instance, for whom 'materiality is not just machines—nor is it just solids, and things, or even objects. Materiality leaks in many directions—also concretely (e-waste)' (2011, 4). Moreover, closer to our present concern, writing on the invention of the museum and of collections of natural history after the French Revolution, Dagognet has shown that the foundation of the museum enabled the birth of what he calls an 'institutional epistemology', co-constituted by the advent of new biological theories.[9] This epistemology enabled by the museum and embodied in it aims less at the accumulation or gathering of beings than their comparison and partition, operating as an 'associationnist combinatorics': 'we accumulated so many beings that one had to find a method to identify each of them' Dagognet writes. And so, by looking at the moving-image components of *Sonsbeek 71*, Dagognet's thought can be dialogued with on several levels. First, based on their description, I will outline how the film and video pavilions reconfigured both the film and exhibition apparatus and how they functioned as an epistemology of the exhibition as medium. Second, consequently, this calls for an analysis on an epistemocritical level, namely a critique of the exhibition as a form that articulated technical, discursive, informational, sensible, and material elements.

Sonsbeek 71's Pavilions and the Moving Image

The exhibition of works of moving images at *Sonsbeek 71* was conceived on the lines of Beeren's emphasis on 'activity' and communication and his intention to turn it into a 'workshop', a gesture intended to create a novel exhibition grammar outside of the usual art historical and museum format. Here it is worth reminding that two years prior, Beeren had curated *Op Losse Schroeven: Situaties en Cryptostructuren* at the Stedelijk Museum in

Amsterdam—which included several of the same artists as Harald Szeemann's *When Attitudes Become Form* in Bern—which already represented a significant curatorial experiment with the limits of the exhibition format, albeit mostly working within the confines of the Stedelijk's walls, or testing its direct external surroundings as well as displaying works as information in the catalogue's pages. The show also included films projects by conceptual artist Jan Dibbets.[10]

As part of *Sonsbeek 71*, film—which held both aesthetic and didactic functions—was envisioned as a direct manifestation of the show's demonstration of 'decentralization and information'.[11] Within the cybernetization of the exhibition apparatus, moving-image apparatuses came to play a crucial role as the show's ethos of decentralization was largely embodied through the pavilions where film and video were shown or produced, the latter being part of the array of means expected to foster the public's participation. As Beeren put it: "The publications, films, events, and the communication centres insure intensive contact" (1971, 13). For Beeren, film was primarily a 'communication media' that, in recent years, had been taken up by artists either as 'means of registration and communication or as an independent visual phenomenon', making the 'loneliest events become food for the masses' (1971, 12). Citing Andy Warhol's work as an example of film as 'autonomous visual expression', Beeren aligned film with his concept of spatial relations, assuming that it 'registers and makes us aware of processes of space and time, often synchronously with our slow "human" tempo' (1971, 12), thus conceiving of it as a prosthetic technology, plugging the human into a machinic processing of audiovisual flows. But, as Beeren added, film was used in 'various ways for the exhibition' (1971, 12). Indeed, films by conceptual artists such as Jan Dibbets and Ger van Elk were commissioned. Moreover, a documentary film recounting the projects made for *Sonsbeek 71* was directed by the filmmaker Joes Odufré. Moreover, Beeren included the category of 'film video', whose description is worth quoting at length:

> The video film was already brought into direct contact with the latest developments in the visual arts when Gerry Schum started his Fernsehgallery and combined several projects that really dealt with the medium of film and sometimes even the medium of T.V. film, in his 'Land Art' (1969). Since cutting is a secondary factor in video, whose force lies in the synchronomy with events, video emphasizes an element that had already become an important feature in underground films: the adjustment

> to our standards of time. Moments in time are no longer synthesized and therefore accelerated into a brilliant film sequence. Cubist or surrealist composition in the art of film-making has been replaced by a succession determined by a natural course of events. Many—particularly American—artists are exploiting the medium and have arrived at an autonomous or at any rate abstractive sign-language that is achieved more often by electronic programming than by the camera. A video studio has been installed at Sonsbeek, and a number of artists have been invited to realize their projects there. It will eventually be possible for other artists to apply for the use of the studio. (Beeren 1971, 12)

This video studio, as well as screenings of structural films, was hosted in a series of three inflatable pavilions designed by the Eventstructure Group, the collective composed of media artists Jeffrey Shaw, Theo Botschuiver, and Sean Wellesley-Miller. The information pavilion, which Jeffrey Shaw described as an 'air-supported hemisphere covered with synthetic grass' (1971c, n.p.), was a simple structure with concrete weighting and where information technologies such as telex, duplication equipment, and short-wave transmitter were available to artists and the public. Second was the Conference Pavilion, also called the Auditorium, a two-storeys structure with pneumatic support. According to Shaw, it was 'the world's first two-level air-supported structure. With two sets of revolving doors, the ground level could operate at a higher pressure than the upper level' (1971b). This two-storey structure was necessary, Shaw further explains, 'to support the weight of people sitting on its ceiling, which was itself the upper-level floor' (1971b). Finally, made of 'PVC tensile skin stretched over three large high-pressure air-inflated arches' (1971a), the Video Pavilion/Studio could host installations, such as a 'complex of monitors connected to a situation—i.e. creating a further basic situation of creator/consumer of art on TV—The public watching the public'.[12]

The moving image at *Sonsbeek 71* was thus a protean object. It existed through projections of structural films and films by conceptual artists, artists' videos, but also as a technology of communication aimed at public participation and as a tool to document the whole event itself. Moreover, this protean presence was paralleled and contingent on the diversity of pavilions in which films were presented. Furthermore, these inflatable infrastructures were themselves material embodiments of the commitment to the communicational ideas that informed the show, their malleability and 'immateriality'

Figure 13.2 Theo Botschuijver, Jeffrey Shaw and Sean Wellesley-Miller, *Video Studio*, Sonsbeek buiten de perken, Park Sonsbeek, Arnheim, Netherlands, 1971.
Source: Photo copyright: Pieter Boersma.

being perceived at the time as 'completely mutable in relation to human interaction and to changes in the climate' (Shaw 2017, n.p.). In this regard, their lightness and ephemeral qualities can also be read as forming the ultimate and most critical material boundaries with regards to Beeren's almost gullible veering towards a fully 'de-materialized' exhibition, entirely liberated from any kind of dispositive. The ERG's pavilions derived from their practice, which in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s operated at 'the intersections of Expanded Cinema and public engagement' (Shaw 2017, n.p.) and in this regard, their intervention at *Sonsbeek* fulfilled both the ERG's and Beeren's respective visions. Indeed, for the ERG, *Sonsbeek* offered a terrain to experiment with the desire to free the cinema from the convention of the film apparatus; as Shaw asserts, 'The air structures were just a resource, a tool, a technological resource on behalf of a much more fundamental purpose which was the liberation of cinema' (2017, n.p.). As for Beeren, these structures were a way to implement his communicational quixoticism of an

Figure 13.3 Theo Botschuijver, Jeffrey Shaw and Sean Wellesley-Miller, *Auditorium*, Sonsbeek buiten de perken, Park Sonsbeek, Arnheim, Netherlands, 1971.

art appreciated outside of the disciplinary forces of the white cube, which telematics infrastructures replaced.

However, in contrast to their previous inflatable structures and their works of expanded cinema, the *Sonsbeek* pavilions were realized as answers to a brief by Beeren. Indeed, as Shaw recalls: 'The opportunity Beeren gave us was to actually take an art or sculptural practice which was very architectonic. To make actual buildings which had certain functions; it was the first time we were given that opportunity. It was his brief for us to design three pavilions' (2017, n.p.). In point of fact, the ERG was not involved in the programming of the pavilions but was commissioned to 'design and build' *functional* structures. If they remained works by the ERG, Shaw grants that they somehow represented 'a bit of a deviation' (2017, n.p.). In any case, for Shaw, both museums and cinema theatres were 'spaces for sleepwalkers' and thus inscribed—in opposition to the obliteration of works unfolding in these apparatuses—his expanded-cinema works as well his pneumatic 'eventstructures' within a modality of 'interactivity [that]

was about bringing back to life this whole [audience-work] dynamic relationship'. Borrowing from his friend and occasional collaborator John Latham's concept of 'eventstructure,[13] Shaw and the ERG's take on the idea was explicitly geared against 'environmental planning' and its supposed neutrality, echoing McLuhan's contention that 'the artist as a maker of anti-environments becomes the enemy in society' and thus 'does not accept the environment with all its brainwashing functions with any passivity whatever' but instead 'turns upon it and reflects his anti-environmental perceptions upon it' (1967, 165).

So, writing with ERG member Theo Botschuiver, Shaw claimed that the environment of the time—in which they included as much the so-called built environment (houses and the urban fabric at large) as landscapes—was characterized by a 'deterministic monumentality' that limited 'the user's range of exercise of his identity'. 'Eventstructures', which in this context were synthetically defined as 'architecture as a multi-state and responsive morphology of structure', offered an alternative to this dominant environmental form:

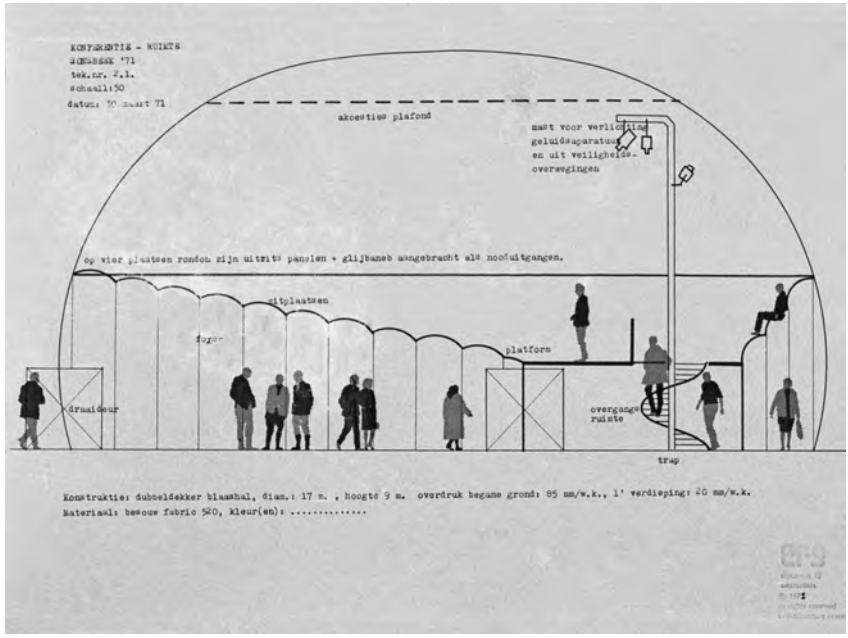

Figure 13.4 Theo Botschuijver, Jeffrey Shaw and Sean Wellesley-Miller, *Auditorium*, Sonsbeek buiten de perken, Park Sonsbeek, Arnheim, Netherlands, 1971.

> Now needed is a new initiative towards a responsive environment of more personal freedom and autonomy, where structure will stimulate and give changing expression to individual and collective identity.
>
> Pneumatic structures offer a viable technology for the realization of these desirable architectural ideals. And introduce us to the radical operational possibilities of the foreseeable 'biomorphic' and cybernetics developments. (Botschuiver and Shaw 1972, 2)

Unfixed, responsive, and modifiable through their encounter with other bodies, pneumatics thus epitomized the neo-logic of the 'eventstructure': while remaining a material edifice—a structure—this very materiality would mutate according to environmental factors. The inflatable structure was, as Shaw suggested, an 'alternative form of environmental situation' that was 'as undetermined as possible' and that depended 'for its life and forms on participant action and invention' (Shaw 1969, n.p.). Furthermore, pneumatics could provide a different conception of the spectacle 'as a model of vitality for everyday' that related to 'the dynamic proportions by which the individual can *mould* his environment'; a spectacle was 'the symbolic scale of excitement towards which the everyday yearns' (Shaw 1969, n.p.). Finally, Shaw concluded his text with the following statement:

> Event as the articulation of communication through time.
>
> The event we look for is when a particular structuring of art/architecture/spectacle/technology makes operational an expanded arena of will and action open to everyone. (Shaw 1969, n.p.)

The use of inflatables by the ERG and others made for a compelling case for the spirit of 'immateriality' that straddled art, film, and architecture, and unlike traditional mediums caged in specific registers of the sensible and condemned to articulate universals by way of singular points of view, pneumatic structures were seen as models of total experience. For Willoughby Sharp, for instance, 'Air art [didn't] interpret reality, it [was] reality' (1968, 263). This enthusiasm for air structures was emblematic of many of the mantras of 1960–1970s cultural production: a turn to the supposedly immaterial, synaesthesia, kineticism, ephemerality, participation, or multiple spectatorial reception within non-Euclidean spaces, to name but those. Moreover, describing this landscape of transversal practices, Shaw mentions not only 'inflatable chairs, inflatable houses, Buckminster Fuller, domes', but

also their solid familiarity with 'those structures designed in a military context or in other contexts such as Osaka's E.A.T Pepsi Pavilion at the Expo '70' (Shaw 2017).[14] Experiments with inflatable structures, air, or geodesic domes were not only sweeping the cultural field but embodied a wider concern with the relationship between information and materiality and its realization through environmental structures, whereby environmental design was coextensive with the engineering of human sociality. Such engineered environments renegotiated the nature-culture divide on the level of the human habitat, as philosopher Peter Sloterdijk has so eloquently analysed in his *Spheres* trilogy (2014a, 2014b, 2016), in which anthropology and ecology are reformulated without the modernist category of an outside, objectified nature, which is, instead, always conceived as human-made. To borrow Sjoerd van Tuinen's analysis of Sloterdijk, one can say that 'our lifeworlds, then, are "human parks," cybernetical spheres of coinhabitation that do not exclude nature, but which are themselves hybrids of nature and culture, or of *physis, technè* and *poièsis*' (van Tuinen 2009, 111).

The pavilions designed by the ERG in Arnhem departed from the group's interest in expanded cinema, which was defined by Shaw as consisting 'in exploding the screen and creating a bridge between the cinematic space and the real space of the audience'. Expanded cinema, in Shaw's vision and experiments, was about 'how to merge these two spaces' (Shaw 2017, n.p.). However, if the pavilions designed by the ERG in Arnhem developed from such work with performative and environmental uses of projected film onto pneumatics and human bodies, 'The three pavilions at *Sonsbeek 71* gave [the ERG] the opportunity to push further the whole architectural argument, to give it a more mature form' (Shaw 2017, n.p.), thus leaving aside—at least in its articulation with film—the problematic of the correlation between the viewer's space and the actual space of the pavilions. Yet one of the functionalities of the Conference Pavilion/Auditorium was precisely to serve as a film theatre, hosting several film programs, each lasting around fifty minutes, a series arranged by curators Frans Haks and Evert van Straaten.[15] As stated in the catalogue, the entire program represented a total running time of two days and was repeated throughout the whole exhibition, thus representing a continuous informational input (1971, 112.1).

Films composing these programs were categorized as follows: 'Structural Films'; 'Land art films (i.e. films in which the artists chose the landscape itself as point of departures)'; and 'Artists film themselves', a label that mostly included films by conceptual artists (1971, 112.1).[16] In this regard, the sole

content of this programming is relevant for the analysis of the phenomenon of projected moving images in art exhibitions to the extent that it brought together practices not pertaining to the same usual networks of diffusion and reception, as structural films, at that time, were still mostly anchored within the circuit of cooperatives and dedicated festivals and theatres, while the two latter operated within the art world. Also, whereas the former represented a body of distinct works exploring and bound to the logic and identity of the medium, the status of film in land art and conceptualism was more ambivalent, occupying a blurred space between an (artistic) event and its recording, thereby complicating the contours of a work and challenging any attempt to objectify it. Amongst the program of 'Artists films themselves' was Gerry Schum's *Identifications*, which extended his project of exhibiting art through the televisual medium initiated with his *Land Art. Fernsehausstellung 1* (1969) (see Wevers et al. 2003). *Identifications* included works by Klaus Rinke in which the artist 'overturn[ed] a 1m3 drum of water'; Stanley Brouwn's *One Step*, featuring 'Brouwn tak[ing] one step with the camera on the Dam in Amsterdam"; and Ger van Elk's *The Well-Shaved Cactus* in which 'Van Elk shaves a cactus' (Sonsbeek 71b, 41). For Schum, the works presented in *Identifications* pointed to 'the correlation between the work of art and the artist in the artistic process', an attempt to 'overcome the separation between the artist and the work of art' (2012, 499). These works, if positioned against the autonomy of the artwork, as Schum contended, would appear to hold a more thorny status, as these unspectacular, 'lazy actions', which pertained more to 'existential pragmatic'[17] than aesthetics and thus undermined capitalism's fetishization of labour production, would at the same time enter the art market and its fetishism for uniqueness as editioned tapes (see Balsom 2017, 143–46).

Swamp (1969), by Nancy Holt and Robert Smithson, was classified as land art. In this six-minute colour film, Holt and Smithson enter a swamp in New Jersey, wandering through the density of tall dried reeds, which occupy most the frame, Holt sometimes directing her Bolex camera to the ground and at times capturing the sky. However, most of the action revolves around the artist couple rambling, Smithson instructing Holt about how to hold the Bolex and about their random whereabouts. The mechanical clicking sound of the camera, the wind, and the friction between their bodies and the reeds provide the site's soundscape. Smithson said of *Swamp*, a record of a confused drift resulting from their partially blocked vision, that it was about 'deliberate obstructions or calculated aimlessness'.

As part of *Sonsbeek 71*'s film program, *Swamp* must be reflected upon together with *Broken Circle* and *Spiral Hill*, Smithson's earthworks in Emmen in northern Holland, as—although they constituted two distinct works—one of the notable aspects of the artist's work was his conceptualization of the relationship between his 'sited' works and his films. In *What Is Philosophy?* Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari formulated the notion of a '*stratigraphic* time where "before" and "after" indicate only an order of superimpositions' (1994, 58). In his reading of Smithson's thinking about cinema, art historian Andrew Uroskie has productively employed this Deleuzo-Guattarian idea to address Smithson's thematization of sites and non-sites, which the artist described as 'whirl[ing] into an indeterminate state' (2005, 64). Consequently, referring to Deleuze's *Cinema 2* (1989), Uroskie contends that the philosopher 'helps us to consider how this very indeterminacy, rather than lacking all form, can give rise to a mode of description analogous to the layered or stratigraphic quality of temporality itself' (2005, 64). For Uroskie, there is a stratigraphic logic at play in Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*—a work that comprised an earthwork and a film—which he identifies as much as working internally within the filmic component of the piece itself, its sonic, visual, and temporal layers being brought close to the work of a 'geologist [who] discerns the overlapping strata of the past', as well as between the film and the earthwork, the former being 'less concerned with delineating spatial location than with the elaboration of what could be called a "stratigraphic" conception of time' (2005, 58). The stratigraphic thus opens up a more complex reading of the relationships between Smithson's land art sculptures, his films, and his writings—which can only be summarized here all too briefly—beyond the reductive notions of documentation or of a cartography of its disparate elements in favour of a fractured, differentiated, and layered vision of what constitutes the work and the way it can be experienced. It is thus tempting here to follow Simon O'Sullivan's 'geoaesthetic' reading of *Spiral Jetty*: 'The film actualizes the different durations and different scales at stake in the experience of the jetty, and written about in the essay. The camera then operates here as a machine eye opening us up to worlds beyond the human' (2006, 120).[18]

Sites of Projection and Epistemological Obstacles

To be sure, the Conference Pavilion in which the film screenings were hosted was no ordinary cinema theatre, its flexibility and responsiveness being more

prone to the audience's activity, thanks to which it could re-modulate itself, and thus somehow being quite at odds with conceptions of the viewer's fixity associated with the model of the black box. Moreover, earthworks such as Smithson's interventions in Emmen, by coalescing with their contextual contingencies and becoming themselves sites, thereby exhibiting the material and environmental conditions from which they became indivisible, seemed, prima facie, antagonistic to the technophilic aesthetics of *Sonsbeek 71* and its communicational infrastructure. Yet, by embracing the singularity and locality of a site, such works implicitly affirmed a transparent mode of communication as well as a form of democratic destination. In this regard, if the sitedness of earthworks was positioned against the ideal of the autonomous work, supposedly unaffected by contextual factors, weren't they actually shifting this ideal towards such alleged democratic address? And to this extent, the stratigraphic layerings of both *Swamp* and *Broken Circle / Spiral Hill* were subsumed under the *Sonsbeek* circuitry, respectively within an information centre and within the informational/actual topological network of the exhibition.[19]

Now I would like to turn to the program of structural films, which was organized by the American curator Regina Cornwell and which also took place in the ERG's Conference Pavilion/Auditorium. That is, the works in this program were neither shown according to the conventions of the movie theatre nor spatialized in a gallery or a museum but were projected on a single screen visible at the centre of the pavilion and thus visible from 360 degrees, above a gigantic, circular, inflatable cushion. The film pavilion could thus be seen as encouraging multiple and collective reception of the works and as increasing the audience's self-awareness, its 'being-thereness'. The inclusion of structural films within an ERG pavilion is of particular interest in that this encounter revealed a peculiar tension between two kinds of artistic development actually sharing a common origin. Indeed, following video art critic Anne-Marie Duguet, media theorist Mark Hansen has noted that 'despite its clear debt to structuralist film' (2006, 56), Shaw's work with inflatable structures marked a radical departure from the space of the screen to explore the 'space beyond the image as the correlate of the body's excess over the image' (2006, 52). Furthermore, perhaps as an effect of the site's functionalism, the relationship between the viewers' bodies with the flow of structural films within such a malleable environment proved problematic. As some of the reactions to the setting from the side of the people linked to the structural film screenings suggest, both the pavilion and the temporal framing of the program were unsuitable. For instance, Michael Snow wrote:

> *One Second in Montreal* is silent but should definitively not be shown simultaneously with any other. It must be shown alone. All my films are designed to be seen from beginning to end and it would be of little benefit to anyone [especially the spectator] if they were shown in a situation so casual. . . . They are experiences, structure in time. For this reason I can show them only if they are shown at clearly scheduled times and it must be clearly stated that there will be no admittance shortly after they have started. I am sure many filmmakers would agree to this principle if it respects the principle of the particular work. I have mentioned this to Ken Jacobs, Joyce Wieland, Hollis Frampton and Ernie Gehr and they are totally in agreement. (1971; cited in Zoller 2007, 151)

This concern was also shared by Regina Cornwell, who, in a letter to curator Frans Haks, questioned the adequacy of the pavilion as a space of reception:

> The inflatable tent and the conditions in the tent, while fitting in with the spatial conceptions of Sonsbeek, seem at odds with certain of the films. That is, most of the filmmakers listed in the Structural Film section regard their work as conceived for a theatre situation.
>
> . . . The structuralists fear the following about the tent: inadequate acoustics and too much light for projection, platforms rather than seats which might encourage short and less attentive viewing members of the audience; projection of four silent works simultaneously, which each work will not being given its due attention because of the competition of three other works; and, the possibility for interruption of a film if spectators are permitted to enter at any time after the beginning of a program. (Cited in Zoller 2007, 150)

And in point of fact, Jeffrey Shaw himself conceded that he might have 'created a situation which may have actually worked against its intended functionality' (2017, n.p.) and that the structure's planned purpose was upset 'by the audience's preference for jumping around on the inflatable floor' (2017, n.p.). Criticisms towards the operationality of the pavilions eventually led Haks to modify the program to 'one-sided film projections every hour' (cited in Zoller 2007, 151) and to 'Tony Conrad's film . . . shown on four afternoons only on Sunday afternoons'.[20]

From this clash between the apparatuses of structural film and of the inflatable structures, two corollary observations can be made. The first concerns the epistemology of the exhibition as performed by *Sonsbeek 71*. On that level—and

Figure 13.5 Theo Botschuijver, Tjebbe van Tijen, Jeffrey Shaw and Sean Wellesley-Miller, *Movie Movie*, 4th International Experimental Film Festival, Knokke-le-Zoute, Knokke-Heist, Belgium, 1967.
Source: Photo copyright: Pieter Boersma.

to return to François Dagognet's characterization of epistemographic, the epistemonomic, and the epistemocritical—it can deciphered that this discrepancy traces some of the boundaries of the epistemonomic field and reveals epistemological obstacles in the process of the cybernetization of the exhibition, which make visible two clashing realities—spaces and signals being inseparable—that the exhibition defined as a communication network is supposed to mediate. Second, this epistemological dimension is identifiable in the aesthetic and curatorial debates of that period (and its analysis is inseparable from them). Indeed, within the discussions concerning the role of the museum in the late 1960s and 1970s, to put it schematically, Beeren's project stated a total move outside of the museum. One of the criticisms of *Sonsbeek 71* is that the effect of its structure shifted attention away from art and the artists to that of the mediators, without whom understanding of the works and the manifestation was difficult for the general public. In contrast, one year later, in 1972, with *Documenta 5* Harald Szeemann advocated a return to the museum, a position summarized in the UNESCO report *Exchange of Views of a Group of Experts*, transcribed by the Swiss curator, which insisted on the restoration of the relationship between the museum and artists:

> When we consider the development of contemporary art, we see that some of the importance formerly attached to objects has now been transferred to gestures, attitudes, events. Conservation has become less important. This situation, in which the presence of artists is essential and less importance is placed on the work of art as a product or for its intrinsic value, should be maintained as long as possible, for it is a characteristic feature of the contemporary art scene. Today we are in permanent contact with artists. Artists are our raw material, our suppliers, and also our most interested public. This means continual collaboration on the basis of mutual confidence between museum staff and artists (Gaudibert et al. 1972, 16).

Hence entertaining a privileged relationship between the museum and the artist was seen as one of the very conditions to maintain the sovereignty of the museum. Yet, furthermore, this reaffirmation of the museum as the only viable tool to present innovative art and stimulate visitors and their participation, by turning the exhibition into a smooth space of information, communication, and event, presented paradoxes. If it did not directly point at *Sonsbeek 71, Problems of the Museum of Contemporary Art in the West* criticized exhibitions that tried to go beyond the walls of the museum or attempted to do so by intervening in the architecture of the museum, a critique formally embodied in the organization of Szeemann's *Documenta 5* and his subsequent projects. Indeed, if it expanded the notion of a traditional exhibition by including artefacts usually not included in museums, it reaffirmed the museum as the only apparatus able to grant art its status of art as well as its power to integrate non-art. This critical moment of exhibition history thus constituted a milestone in the genealogy of contemporary curatorship and of the figure of the curator, defined by Boris Groys as 'a radically secularized artist'.

> He is an artist because he does everything artists do. But he is an artist who has lost the artist's aura, who no longer has magical transformative powers at his disposal, who cannot endow objects with artistic status. He doesn't use objects—art objects included—for art's sake, but rather abuses them, makes them profane. (2008, 50–51)

But the conclusion concerning *Sonsbeek 71* and its integration of film and land art within its all-encompassing communicational hysteria may be left to Raymond Ruyer's words:"Whether the physical world and the world of

machines be left to themselves, everything will spontaneously disrupt itself; everything will prove that there had never been a true order, in other words, that there had never been any information" (1954, 10).

Notes

1. For a comparison of both exhibitions see Rattemeyer 2010. Here, 'New Art' refers to the spectrum of practices that emerged in the 1960s, ranging from conceptual art to Arte Povera and land art and often characterized by an anti-Greenbergian and anti-medium-specific stance.
2. See the ERG's contribution in the catalogue (*Sonsbeek 71* 1971a, 40–43). The conception of an exhibition unfolding on a national scale and as a network of communication centres was already formulated by Stan Vanderbeek. Not only does the spherical structure of Sonsbeek's pavilions resemble his Movie Drome, but they also share a similar techno-utopian ethos enabling communication beyond spatial limits. Indeed Vanderbeek already envisioned that 'audio-visual research centers be established on an international scale to explore the existing audio-visual devices and procedures, develop new image making devices, and store and transfer image materials, motion pictures, television, computers, video-tape, etc.' (Vanderbeek [1965] 1966, 15). Moreover, such domes, inspired by Buckminster Fuller's dymaxion structures, were a staple of international fairs, including in Osaka, where Billy Klüver and E.A.T. conceived a pavilion, with the sponsorship of Pepsi. The idea of the pavilion originally came from artist Robert Whitman. See Klüver et al. 1972.
3. Space lacks for a detailed discussion of the disciplines involved in the process of cybernetization. For instance, they formed the basis of what Jean-François Lyotard referred to as his 'working hypothesis' in his analysis of the factors that brought about the crisis of modernist rationality. For the philosopher, most prevailing forms of scientific and technological knowledge dealt 'with language: phonology and theories of linguistics, problems of communication and cybernetics, modern theories of algebra and informatics, computers and their languages, problems of translation and the search for areas of compatibility among computer languages, problems of information storage and data banks, telematics and the perfection of intelligent terminals, paradoxology' (Lyotard [1979] 1984, 1).
4. Althaus's writings and concepts were always tested empirically and were in dialogue with his practice as a curator and museum director. *Das offene Museum* was also the title of a show he curated at Kunsthalle Basel in 1970. See the review in Müller 1970.
5. One of Hultén's essays on the subject was published next to Althaus's article in the review *Skira*. See Hultén 1975, 126.
6. Marshall McLuhan distinguished between 'hot media' and 'cool media', the former being richer in information, while the latter, endowed with 'lower definition', necessitated more participation from the audience. See McLuhan 1964, 24–35.
7. Unless otherwise specified, all translations are the author's.

8. In this text, Dagognet discussed the debate between naturalists Georges Cuvier and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire (1830). Their polemic concerned animal structure, Cuvier generally being associated with a pluralist view on animal groups as fundamentally heterogeneous with no common plane of belonging, while Geoffroy's theory was that all animal structures could be relegated to the same plane. While Cuvier's became the dominant view, Dagognet showed that Cuvier's very theoretical premises—his 'scalar representation of animals'—was erroneous. Deciphering Dagognet's analysis, Foucault contended that 'epistemological transformations can take place, even through a system of affirmation which would appear to be scientifically false' (Foucault's discussion in Dagognet 1999, 230).
9. Thus for Dagognet, 'a scientific theory is always the formalisation of an instrumental dispositif' (Godin 2014, 188).
10. *Op Losse Schroeven: Situaties en Cryptostructuren*, 15 March–27 April 1969, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. It subsequently travelled to Museum Folkwang in Essen under the title *Verborgene Struckturen, 9 May–29 June 1969. When attitudes become form. Live in your head* was curated by Harald Szeemann at Kunsthalle Bern from 22 March to 27 April 1969. Both shows are associated with the establishment of conceptual art in Europe and included minimal art, Arte Povera, and figures who partook in the development of land art. Despite their contemporaneity and similar sensibilities, Beeren's exhibition has largely remained overshadowed by Szeemann's, which has become a master narrative of sorts for the emergence of the exhibition as the medium of the 'curator as author'. On Szeemann's 'invention' of a new cultural-professional status see Heinich 1995).
11. Anonymous, *Opzet voor 1971: decentralisatie en informatie* (*Set-up for 1971: Decentralisation and Information*), Gelders Archief Arnhem, Sonsbeek 1971: Sonsbeek buiten de perken, 2058/2.2/40: Stukken betreffende een te organiseren zesde Sonsbeektentoonstelling in 1970 of 1971, n.p.
12. A general technical description of the three pavilions was published in the Swiss architecture review *Das Werk*. See 'Die drei Pavillons der 'Sonsbeek '71'", *Das Werk 9*, no. 58 (1971).
13. In 1967, Latham and Shaw produced an installation that blended the former's *Book Plumbing* work with the latter's expanded cinema. The work was realised in the basement of Bob Cobbing's Better Books bookshop in London. See http://www.jeffreyshawcompendium.com/portfolio/book-plumbing/. For Latham 'Art is Event Structure' and is connected to 'cosmological theory [which] has begun to affirm the primacy of Event'. See Latham 1984, 7–8.
14. On the Pepsi Pavilion see Klüver et al. 1972. In 1968, the Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris hosted an exhibition dedicated to the imaginary of inflatables in art, technology, architecture, and daily life, organised by the architects collective Utopie (which also included Jean Baudrillard and urbanist Hubert Tonka). The group was heavily influenced by the Situationist International and by the writings of Henri Lefebvre. See the catalogue: *Catalogue de l'exposition structures gonflables mars 1968, précédé d'un Essai technique et société de Considérations inactuelles sur le gonflable et de Particularité des structures gonflables* (Paris: Musée d'art moderne de la ville de

Paris, 1968). The magazine *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui* featured a lengthy section on the topic covering the work of Walter Pichler, Archigram, Morton Subotnick's discothèque the Electric Circus, Utopie, and the architecture group Haus-Rucker-Co's Mind-Expander. See *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui* 1967–1968. For a more recent account see Dessauce 1999. For an overview of architectural debates as they appeared in the pages of the UK-based journal *Architectural Design* in the 1960s and 1970s see Parnell 2012, 130–35. On expanded cinema and inflatables in the work of the collective Ant Farm, see Scott 2007.

15. The pavilion was located in the garden of Arnhem's Gemeentmuseum.
16. The full list of artists of the film section was the following: Vito Acconci, Bas Jan Ader, Eric Andersen, Giovanni Anselmo, Joseph Beuys, Alighiero Boetti, Boezem, George Brecht, Stanley Brouwn, John Cale, Pier Paolo Calzolari, John Cavanaugh, Christo, Tony Conrad, Gino de Dominicis, Walter de Maria, Jan Dibbets, Ger van Elk, Albert Fine, Hamish Fulton, Hollis Frampton, Ernie Gehr, Gilbert & George, Dan Graham, Michael Heizer, Ken Jacobs, Joe Jones, Peter Kubelka, George Landow, Standish Lawder, Richard Long, Mario Merz, Robert Morris, Bruce Nauman, Robert Nelson, Yoko Ono, Dennis Oppenheim, Nam June Paik, James Riddle, Klaus Rinke, Peter Roehr, Ulrich Rückriem, Reiner Ruthenbeck, Wim Schippers, Richard Serra, Paul Sharits, Chieko Shiomi, Robert Smithson, Michael Snow, Keith Sonnier, Pieter Vanderbeek, Franz Erhard Walther, Robert Watts, Lawrence Weiner, Joyce Wieland, and Gilberto Zorio.
17. See Maurizo Lazzarato's analysis of Marcel Duchamp's anti-work ethics. As Lazzarato writes, 'Refusal opens to radical heterogeneity. Nothing is further from capitalist work than lazy action, whose actualization of political-existential potential subverts art as well as art's negation' (2014, 15).
18. For Smithson's essay see Smithson 1996.
19. In addition, this integration of land art within *Sonsbeek 71*'s communicational apparatus was further demonstrated by the ERG's Information Pavilion, which was covered with synthetic grass and was thus evolutive and changing according to local climatic conditions. For Shaw, this 'grass pavilion was closest to what [they] were actually doing, related to [their] "artificial landscapes" and their "land art sensibility" ' (2017).
20. Anonymous, 'Filmpaviljeon', Gelders Archief Arnhem, Sonsbeek 1971: Sonsbeek buiten de perken, 2058: inv 40.

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