

Chapter 3

Beyond the Virtual Public Square: Ubiquitous Computing and the New Politics of Well-Being

Gregory L. Ulmer and John Craig Freeman

3.1 Introduction

Whereas the public square was once the quintessential place to air grievances, display solidarity, express difference, celebrate similarity, remember, mourn, and reinforce shared values of right and wrong, it is no longer the only anchor for interactions in the public realm. Public discourse has been relocated to a novel space: a virtual space that encourages exploration of mobile location-based art in public. Moreover, public space is now truly open, as artworks can be placed anywhere in the world, without prior permission from government or private authorities – with profound implications for art in the public sphere and the discourse that surrounds it. The early 1990s witnessed the migration of the public sphere from the physical realm, the town square and its print augmentation, to the virtual realm, the Internet. In effect, the location of public discourse and the site of national identity formation have been extended into the virtual world and the global network. Electracy is to digital media what literacy is to print. It encompasses the broader cultural, institutional, pedagogical, and ideological implications inherent in the transition our society is undergoing. Electracy describes the functional metaphysics necessary to exploit the full discursive potential of electronic media such as mobile media, the Internet and augmented (mixed) reality. With the emergence of these technologies on mobile devices, the distributed placefulness of Internet public discourse entertains the possibility of a new global democracy.

Orators, Rostrums, and Propaganda Stands, shown in Fig. 3.1, is based on the work of Gustav Gustavovich Klucis, including his designs for screen-radio orators,

G.L. Ulmer (✉)

Department of English and Media Studies, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL, USA
e-mail: glue@ufl.edu; <http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/glue/>; <http://emeragency.electracy.org>

J.C. Freeman

Department of Visual and Media Arts, Emerson College, Boston, MA, USA
e-mail: john_craig_freeman@emerson.edu; <http://JohnCraigFreeman.net>



Fig. 3.1 Orators, rostrums, and propaganda stands by John Craig Freeman, Speaker's Square, Singapore, 2013, Augmented reality public art

rostrums, and propaganda stands from 1922. Klucis was a pioneering member of the Russian Constructivist avant-garde in the early twentieth century. As Russian politics degenerated under the Stalin dictatorship in the 1920s and 1930s, Klucis came under increasing pressure to devote his artwork to state propaganda. Despite his loyal service to the Communist Party, Klucis was arrested in Moscow on January 17, 1938. His whereabouts remained a mystery until 1989, when it was discovered that he had been executed by Stalin just after his arrest (Šatskih 2001). Each of the four virtual objects display a black and white animation from a contemporary mass uprising: Tank Man near Tiananmen Square in Beijing in 1989; the assassination of Neda Agha-Soltan, who was gunned down in the streets of Tehran during the 2009 Iranian election protests; scenes from Tahrir Square in Cairo during the 2011 Arab Spring; and the 2011 Occupy Wall Street uprising. Each of these images is juxtaposed, in montage, with frames from the Odessa Steps scene of Sergei Eisenstein's historic *Battleship Potemkin* film. When touched, the virtual objects play sound from the uprising. The stands call up both the resurgence and nostalgia of current worldwide political idealism as they re-imagine the public square, now augmented with the worldwide digital network.

3.2 Ubimage

The works included here are a sample of experiments testing a consulting practice (konsult) native to electracy (the digital apparatus). The consultations reference the EmerAgency, a virtual "agency", promoting a fifth estate for a global

public sphere. The genre of konsult applies Arts & Letters knowledge and methods to policy-formation controversies, with the purpose of giving social media an independent means for a collective voice with which to address governments, corporations, and entertainment entities. One premise of the experiments is that an apparatus is a social machine. Its invention includes not only technologies, but also authoring practices within new institutional support, and identity experience and behavior of individuals and groups (Ulmer 2003).

The technology of augmented (mixed) reality, ubiquitous pervasive computing (mobile locative media), when considered within the full apparatus of electracy, constitutes *ubimage*. It assumes a vision of technics on a trajectory of innovation of which the current emblem is Google Glass: the prospect of a physical and cultural environment in which there is a convergence and syncretism of total real-time information (Internet) with the present lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*). This convergence exists first as a juxtaposition or superimposition, with a host of emerging practices attempting a suture. Apparatus history shows that the invention of authoring practices has its own sources apart from the evolution of technics.

3.3 Apparatus

The electrate apparatus is invented in three registers: technology, compositional practices, and identity formation. The saturation of everyday environments with mobile devices encountering sensor settings is the contribution of technics. Interactive equipment establishes at the level of technics a feature of the world central to the history of the arts, which materialize and augment a human capacity to be affected by place and event. Marcel Proust's involuntary memory, triggered by the taste of a tea biscuit (Proust 2006) or the Wolf Man (Freud 1963), whose obsessions were triggered by the site of a maid scrubbing the floor, are two famous examples of embodied triggers, emblematic of this capacity. Ubimage is a logic of *catalysis*, just as literate dialectic is a logic of analysis.

A primary focalizer for the responsibilities of konsult is Paul Virilio and his warnings about the General Accident (Virilio 1997) and more conventionally the historical fact that every invention comes with a Gift Cause (extending Aristotle's four causes beyond intentionality: material, formal, efficient, final) (Falcon 2012). Gift cause is the unintended inevitable accident associated with every invention. What is the accident potential of ubicomp? It is worth remembering that Heidegger anticipated Virilio's warnings in saying that catastrophe is inherent in being. Those YouTube videos showing "funniest home video" moments of smartphoner accidents reenact one of the founding events of philosophy (Thales fell into a ditch while gazing at the stars). "The actively violent one, the creator, who moves out into the un-said, breaks into the un-thought, who compels the un-happened and makes the unseen appear, this actively violent one stands at all times in peril. In risking a



Fig. 3.2 *Border Memorial: Frontera de los Muertos* by John Craig Freeman, On the road to Ajo along Highway 86, Arizona, 2013, Augmented reality public art

prevailing over being, he must take a risk with regard to the onrush of non-being, with regard to disintegration, un-constancy, lack of structural order and disorder” (Heidegger 2000).

Heidegger’s account foregrounds the “violence” of creative invention that produces both human prevailing against the overwhelming (nature) and also catastrophe (the lesson of tragedy in general). His insight is that *aporia* is an irreducible dimension of *poros*. These experiments register this complexity: *a/poria*, *im/mobility*, *no/way*. *Ubimage* for well-being is a practice of *a/poria* (*im/mobile media*).

Border Memorial: Frontera de los Muertos, shown in Fig. 3.2, is an augmented reality public art project and memorial, dedicated to the thousands of migrant workers who have died along the U.S./Mexico border in recent years trying to cross the desert southwest in search of work and a better life. This project allows people to visualize the scope of the loss of life by marking each location where human remains have been recovered. Based on a traditional form of wood-carving from Oaxaca, the virtual object consists of life sized, three dimensional geometric models of a skeleton effigy or *calaca*. *Calacas* are used in commemoration of lost loved ones during the Mexican *Día de los Muertos*, or Day of the Dead festivals. According to indigenous belief, despite the tragedy, death should always be celebrated (Holmer 2005). In the tradition of *Día de los Muertos*, the *Border Memorial* project is designed to honor, celebrate and remember those who have died and to vault this issue into public consciousness and American political debate. The project is intended to provide a kind of lasting iconic presence in an otherwise ephemeral physical environment and cultural discourse.

3.4 Theoria

This sample of works retrieves the institution of theoria, as practiced in the ancient world – a combination of tourism and theory. The most famous example of theoria is the visit of the three Wise Men to the manger in Bethlehem, to determine the truth of the rumors that a new king was born. A theoros (member of a theoria) is sage, someone like Solon for the Classical Greeks, a person trusted by the community, dispatched to sort out fact from fiction in the information flow of a community (Plato 2006a). Theoria toured a situation, consulted with locals who served as guides to all the shrines, sites, and important personages of the area. The theoria announced its findings *in the public square of its home city*, and these findings constituted what was the case. Aristotle's invention of metaphysics began with the *Categories*, as if codifying in grammar the declarative form that may be determined as either true or false, for making trustworthy statements in the service of the Polis. A version of his categories survive today in traditional journalism (the five W's, beginning with "What?").

Ubimage makes possible a new dimension of consulting, triangulating between the present institution of tourism (a vital contemporary vernacular behavior, largest single industry in the world), and the historical practice of divination (tarot, for example, mapping the universal journey through life for pre-modern people). Divination was an essential part of traditional deliberative reason, concerned with decision-making to influence future conditions. It was a faculty for processing the future, just as memory is a faculty for processing the past. Both tourism and divination model a certain functionality to be appropriated by ubimage. Tourism orients GPS (physical mobility), and divination orients EPS – Existential Positioning System (metaphysical mobility). The retrieval of these registers of theoria for konsult calls attention to the contradiction of contemporary media: enthusiasm for mobile computing masks the metaphysical immobility of modernity, the fundamental aporias that arrest policy decisions on behalf of well-being at every turn (trope). The global city remains as paralyzed as it was when its labyrinth was first surveyed by modernist arts and philosophy. The era of electracry begins in the industrial city.

Tarot and the I Ching are especially misunderstood, due to caricature survivals in New Age and self-help contexts. These popular, vernacular practices, nonetheless, are a resource for invention in that they provide a background tradition of popular decision-making. The fifth estate via social media is crowd-sourced self-help democracy. Greek philosophy (literate metaphysics) was not invented from scratch, but was generated in the new educational institution – the Academy – as a syncretism and refinement of cultural features of the contemporary society, including the oral culture of spoken Greek. Tarot was created in Renaissance Italy and is a popular expression of the same forces shaping the work of the Neoplatonic Academy in Florence. It acquired most of its hermetic aspects in the same environment nurturing the birth of the avant-garde arts in Paris in the nineteenth century, and the commentaries bringing it most fully into contact with



Fig. 3.3 *Flotsam & Jetsam* by John Craig Freeman, Singapore, 2013, Augmented reality public art

contemporary thought are found in psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis, in its cultural productivity, is divination, repurposed as a new logic mapping the vicissitudes of enjoyment.

Gregory Bateson identified the keywords of the oral and literate apparatuses in his book *Mind and Nature* (Bateson 2002). Reality in the oral apparatus (extended via Religion into the present) is organized by the principles of *salvation* (spiritual transcendence). Reality in the literate apparatus (extended via Science into the present) is organized by the principles of *entropy* (material immanence). Bateson does not address electracy, but the twin realities of salvation and entropy suggest why a third option is desirable. Reality in the electracy apparatus (with the effect of reordering the other institutions) is organized around *well-being* – the problematic of happiness, recently entering public policy in the form of hedonics. At present this organization is emergent within Entertainment, commercial and commodity forms, the institutionalization of aesthetics. As Kant argued in promoting aesthetic taste to equal status with Pure and Practical Reason in his third critique, the function of judgments of beauty and the sublime was to bridge the abyss separating nature's necessity and human freedom (Kant 1951).

Flotsam is floating wreckage of a ship or its cargo. Jetsam is part of a ship, its equipment, or its cargo that is purposefully cast overboard or jettisoned to lighten the load in time of distress and that sinks or is washed ashore by the coriolis effect: planetary vorticity along with horizontal and vertical friction. Marking the contour of the expected sea level 50 years from now, *Flotsam & Jetsam*, shown in Fig. 3.3, is a clarion call for the denizens of the world to take seriously the science of climate change and other abuses to the global environment by envisioning the debris left by storm surge and other manifestations of the incoming tide.

3.5 The Malala Test

What is at stake in this syncretizing ambition for the arts in electracy may be seen in the irreducible hostility between religion and science currently plaguing civilization. We must appreciate that this confrontation is between not just institutions, but entire apparati. Any number of incidents might represent the impasse for our time, as the confrontation between Galileo and the Church did for Bertolt Brecht. A radical Islamist group in Nigeria calling itself “Boko Haram” (meaning “Western Education is Sacrilege”), burned down a school in Nigeria, killing 29 students and an English teacher. The Khmer Rouge included in its genocide anyone wearing glasses, a shibboleth signaling “intellectual.” Konsult takes the side of Malala Yousafzai against her Taliban would-be assassins: “One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world,” she declared, in demanding the right to education for everyone. Ubimage takes up again the old struggle between pens and swords, to demand that religion and science correlate with well-being.

A caveat to avoid melodramatic oversimplifications of the test is found in another version of the opposition: Jihad vs. McWorld. Is Las Vegas the best electracy can do in promoting the good life? Each apparatus has its own version of fair and foul. What if obesity fell into the wrong hands? The challenge of ubimage is to extrapolate from the inventions of corporate entertainment (the leading edge of electrate institution formation) the means of metaphysical innovation that transforms the conflict of civilizations into a correlation of apparati. What in fact constitutes well-being? Aristotle said it was happiness, accomplished through the good, but these transcendental terms could only be defined within a Polis, a political community, since they were not given as actual, but only as potential. The fifth estate (ubiquitous democracy) is this Polis. An immediate goal of konsult is to develop a practice to support community institutionalization of well-being outside merely commercial values (Bataille’s restricted economy) (Bataille 1991), but also apart from the restrictions of religion and science. The short-term goal of the present experiments is to understand and undergo for ourselves the basic insight into well-being expressed in Arts & Letters tradition, as a first step toward designing a practice for general electracy.

The convergence of Internet and lifeworld producing an ecology of information creates a need and opportunity to develop a contemporary version of the microcosm-macrocosm correspondences enjoyed by pre-modern civilizations. The systems of correspondences organizing divination that oriented individuals to the ethos and habitus of society were destroyed by modernity (scientific industrialized utilitarian society). The program for a new “correspondence” (Baudelaire’s “forest of symbols” (Baudelaire 1994), Walter Benjamin’s Arcades allegory (Benjamin 1999)) concerns the functionality modeled in oracles such as Tarot or the I Ching, if not the cultural content of those systems. Oracle “games” allow individuals to author epiphanies, and the epiphany form survived in modernist poetry and art in the absence of the system that supplied data from the wisdom traditions in support of practical reason (decision procedures). The experiments undertaken in

ubimage design and test a contemporary practice of correspondences, constructing a system of macro-micro-cosmos for an electrated wisdom. Ubimage is a practice of “macroimaging” (arts equivalent of macroeconomics, each dealing with the dynamics of information circulation).

3.6 Obscenario

The obscenario is a transitional alternative to the *scenarios* of conventional consulting, as a means to imagine the future in order to decide policy in a flash. Concepts are literate, and the purpose of Philosophy, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is to create concepts (Deleuze and Guattari 1994). Transition from literacy to electracy requires learning how to extend conceptual thinking within electrated media, in order to imagine our way into the new apparatus. Deleuze and Guattari analyzed “concept” into three components: an idea (term), a problem field addressed by the idea, and a conceptual persona who dramatizes the import of the idea in a situation. Obscenario shifts the emphasis from literate foregrounding of the eidos (abstract configuration of properties) to persona in a situation, which lends itself to imaging. The prototype of a conceptual persona is Socrates, dramatizing “dialectic” as idea in the dialogues of Plato. We rely on this analogy to move into the invention of a post-literate practice: an avatar of concept. The phrase is ambiguous: the concept of “avatar,” and an avatar of “concept” (which itself may not appear). The first step, in other words, is to develop within literate skills a concept adequate to the invention of konsult: a practice that does for electracy what the dialogue did for literacy.

The relay from Socrates is useful to identify the features of obscenario. There are several levels for emulation: (1) Plato creates the dialogue as a device to communicate in writing the new logic of dialectic. Students are introduced to dialectic (analysis and synthesis) through an interface metaphor, the behavior of the gadfly Socrates. Dialogue as pedagogy requires a certain attitude: a commitment among friends to suspend competition in order to discover what is objectively (logically) true; (2) the scenario proper is Socrates encountering an interlocutor on the streets of Athens, in everyday life, as in *Euthyphro*, for example (Plato 2006b). Euthyphro is in a situation: he has decided to prosecute his father for impiety. Socrates asks Euthyphro to define his terms: what does he mean by “impiety.” Of course to define a term produces a concept – a literate skill, but Euthyphro is illiterate; (3) The context for the apparatus is the invention of practices of logic to augment pure reason, as a capacity of selfhood (individual identity) in a democratic state (collective identity). The instruction is to extrapolate to our own case.

Concept Avatar is not dialogue or dialectic, but uses those to generate an electrated equivalent, to do for EmerAgency konsult what dialogue did for Plato’s Academy. The capacity to be addressed, supported, augmented in konsult via ubimage is not reason (logic), but affect, sensory perception (aesthetics). The medium (equipment) is not alphabetic writing, but ubiquitous computing (pervasive computing: mobile devices in smart environments). Euthyphro in the midst of a situation encountered in the streets of Athens the gadfly Socrates. Egent (intern of



Fig. 3.4 *EEG AR: Things We Have Lost* by John Craig Freeman, Liverpool, 2013, Augmented reality public art

EmerAgency) consulting (testifying) on public policy encounters, via smart device in an intelligent environment, avatar. The experiments collected here are traces of avatar. Who is addressee of konsult? First, it is the egent and her network (self-addressed, middle voice). Ubimage is not a spectacle, but a distributed gadfly.

EEG AR: Things We Have Lost, shown in Fig. 3.4, allows participants to conjure up virtual objects by simply imagining them into existence using brainwave sensor technology. As part of the research, development and community engagement of this project, in 2012 we selected people at random in the streets of Liverpool and simply asked “What have you lost?” The location was recorded, a virtual lost object was created based on the response and the objects were then placed back in the exact GPS coordinates using augmented reality technology, creating a citywide network of lost things. Through this process a database of lost things was generated, including pensions, empires, dodo birds, etc. During the experimental phase of the project, test subjects were outfitted with EEG-reading brainwave sensors and ask to think deeply about what he or she has lost. Once our software detects a measurable and consistent pattern, it issues a database call to instantiate a virtual lost object at random from the database. The virtual object then appears in front of the participant, viewable on any iPhone or Android device.

3.7 Ordinary Aura

The Socratic Dialogue as a relay for concept avatar clarifies in the hypotyposis (proportional analogy) that konsult foregrounds not critical reason but perceptual affect (see also the three registers of Deleuze and Guattari: Science, Philosophy,

Arts – fact, concept, affect-percept). The challenge of ubimage is to design a practice capable of work-play with all three orders at once in the context of a situation. Such is the skill-set of electracy. The exercise testing concept avatar (the thought of feeling) takes up the imperative of the avant-garde, championed in many forms subsequently—to merge art with everyday life. The terminology calls attention to the specific target of ubimage relative to apparatus theory. The STEM engineers, as they say, have saturated the Everyday world (*Lebenswelt*) with equipment (mobile devices networking with sensors in smart environments). That takes care of technics, but the commentary tends to assume that Everyday Life is unproblematic, which is far from the case. In fact, the Everyday is a major topic of discipline interest, as for example in the philosophy of Henri Lefebvre (Lefebvre 1992), taken up in Situationism, Guy Debord (Debord 1994), not to mention Walter Benjamin's Arcades Project (Benjamin 1999), and the Frankfurt School focus on the problem of alienation as the impoverishment of everyday life experience.

Specifically, the parallel with digital convergence and saturation is the integration of the aesthetic attitude into lifeworld behavior and skills. Here is a key to the electrate apparatus in general: it emerges into metaphysics through the aesthetic attitude, just as literacy as science required the frame of curiosity in order to thrive. The invention of an “attitude” is part of apparatus formation. “Aesthetics” introduces a certain “distance” into experience, termed “aura” by Benjamin. It is important to clarify that the devotion to “pure art” (art for art's sake) during the initial period of electracy in nineteenth-century Paris (Parisian Bohemia in Montmartre cabarets is the electrate equivalent of the Athenian academies creating a space for pure reason) was inventive, a necessary concentration for articulation of art as “logic,” prior to dissemination as general cultural interface (GCI) for an electrate civilization. The point is that netizens (ubizens) via the apparatus are able to include aura not as separation from but syncretic with their other institutional behaviors – work, family, leisure. Aura (aesthetic attitude) *creates value*, which recommends it as the means to overcome alienation and recover experience of individual and collective agency, which is the avatar function. The insight is that well-being refers to specific values, whose aesthetic character can and should be realized through public policy. “Being a dynamic principle, the aesthetic function is potentially unlimited; ‘it can accompany every human act, and every object can manifest it.’ Its limit lies in the fact that it derives from the dialectical negation of a practical or communicative function. And because the phenomena it produces in the constant renewal of the aesthetic experience are subject to societal judgment, i.e., must find public recognition before they can enter the tradition-creating process as aesthetic norms, there is a second, intersubjective limitation. In contrast to Roman Jakobson's earlier definition of the poetic influence of language, the aesthetic function is not self-referential for Mukarovsky, it is more than a statement oriented toward expression for its own sake. Because the aesthetic function changes everything that it touches into a sign, it becomes transparent for the thing or activity that it “sets aside some practical association.” Precisely because the aesthetic function differs from all others (the noetic, the political, the pedagogic) in having no “concrete aim” and because it lacks “unequivocal content,” it can take hold of the contents of other functions and give their expression the most effective form” (Jauss 1982).



Fig. 3.5 *Water wARs* by John Craig Freeman, Beneath the Brooklyn Bridge, New York, 2011, Augmented reality public art

Such is the attitude native to electracy. What the spiritual is to orality and the materialist to literacy, the aesthetic is to electracy.

Water wARs, shown in Fig. 3.5, anticipates the flood of environmental refugees into the developed world caused by environmental degradation, global warming and the privatization of the world's drinking water supply by multinational corporations like Bechtel. The project consists of a sprawling virtual shanty pavilion for undocumented artists/squatters and water war refugees.

3.8 Choragraphy

Konsult is a practice to correlate existential experience with everyday life materiality. For an environment to be intelligent, the apparatus needs to manage not only physical location (GPS), but EPS, which requires tracking not only presence but absence (*différance*) (Derrida 1998). If conventional wayfinding gives coordinates that say "You Are Here," existential coordinates engage a more complex orientation: *You are where you are not, and are not where you are*. A konsult is an event of encounter between agents and places, both of which involve dimensions that are not phenomenal, not present, without presence and not presentable. Such are the coordinates mapped through ubimage. Thoreau's *Walden* concludes with a figure that provides an emblem for EPS: "What was the meaning of that South-Sea Exploring Expedition, with all its parade and expense, but an indirect recognition of the fact that there are continents and seas in the moral world to which every man is an isthmus or an inlet, yet unexplored by him, but that it is easier to sail many 1,000

miles through cold and storm and cannibals, in a government ship, with 500 men and boys to assist one, than it is to explore the private sea, the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean of one's being alone" (Thoreau 1992).

Chorography as ontological mapping takes up this question of coordinating material and spiritual wayfinding, exploring the shifting borders and thresholds between inner and outer well-being.

Thoreau's passage is emblematic because it uses global exploration and mapping as a metaphor for self-knowledge. The challenge of EPS chorography is that the space-time for which it is responsible is a second-order construction, figurative rather than literal, emerging through aesthetic formal manipulation of media. But the promise of ubimagis is to create an interface convergence of literal and figurative dimensions of human experience.

Clive James gives an idea of the nature of figuration that renders intelligible the nonphenomenal dimension absent from all maps. "Any poem that does not just slide past us like all those thousands of others usually has an ignition point for our attention. To take the most startling possible example, think of "Spring," by Gerard Manley Hopkins. Everyone knows the first line because everyone knows the poem. "Nothing is so beautiful as Spring" is a line that hundreds of poets could have written, and was probably designed to sound that way. Only two lines further on, however, we get "Thrush's eggs look little low heavens" and we are electrified. Eventually we see that the complete poem is fitting in its every part, for its task of living up to the standards of thought and perception set by that single flash of illumination. But we wouldn't even be checking up if we had not been put on the alert by a lightning strike of an idea that goes beyond thought and perception and into the area of metaphorical transformation that a poem demands. A poem . . . is dependent on this ability to project you into a reality so drastically rearranged that it makes your hair fizz even when it looks exactly like itself" (James 2008).

Poetry is a guide for how to introduce an ignition point into public space. Two aspects of James's description are worth noting in our context: the figure of electrification and the lightning strike of an image, resonant with electracry and flash reason; that the version of reality made receivable through aesthetic indirection is – like Plato's metaphysical dimension of *chora*, the interface between Being and Becoming – beyond both thought and perception.

Tiananmen SquARed, shown in Fig. 3.6, is a two part augmented reality public art project and memorial, dedicated human rights and democracy worldwide. The project includes virtual replicas of the Goddess of Democracy and Tank Man from the 1989 student uprising in Tiananmen Square. Both augmentations have been placed in Beijing at the precise GPS coordinates where the original incidents took place. The Goddess of Democracy was a 33-foot tall statue, constructed in only 4 days out of foam and papier-mâché over a metal armature. Students from an art institute created the statue, placing it to face toward a huge picture of the late Communist Party chairman Mao Zedong. Tanks later flattened the statue when China's military crushed the protest. Tank Man was an anonymous man who stood in front of a column of Chinese Type 59 tanks the morning after the Chinese military



Fig. 3.6 *Tiananmen SquARed* by 4 Gentlemen, Tiananmen Square, Beijing, 2010, Augmented reality public art

forcibly removed protestors from in and around Beijing's Tiananmen Square on June 5, 1989. The man achieved widespread international recognition due to the videotape and photographs taken of the incident.

3.9 Aesthetic Attitude

Konsult includes aesthetic attitude in the public sphere, to exercise and enhance capacity to be affected. The attitude is modeled in several areas of common experience: tourism, movies, arts and crafts. Konsult applies the vanguard project of merging art with everyday life, not to make art, but to put the stamp of being on becoming. Moment against dromosphere in any case attempts praxis as poiesis. It is possible through ubimage to syncretize in one performance the three intellectual virtues – an *act recorded as image of political import that produces understanding for an agent*: Achilles, Pericles, and Homer in one. Despite his existentialist credentials, Sartre was wrong (Sartre 2013): it is possible to live and tell (at least in electracry). Such acts constitute the distributed agency of a fifth estate in a global public sphere.

Orhan Pamuk, in his novel *Snow*, tells the story of Ka, an exiled poet who returns to Turkey to report on a wave of suicides, and also to reconnect with a woman he had loved in his youth. He has not written any poetry in a number of years. But during the events of his visit, the old creative capacity returns, at least briefly, and he is able to write a poem. The example is relevant to us not for the poem, but for how the feelings of significance arise in the midst of a situation, pursuing both

professional and personal projects, while reflecting on the meaning and purpose of his life. The immediate instructions may be derived from the gradual dawning of inspiration as the circumstances of recent incidents begin to form into a system of correspondences producing epiphany.

“He made his way along the train track, past the snow-covered silo that loomed overhead like a great white cloud, and was soon back inside the station. As he passed through the empty, dirty building, he saw a dog approaching, wagging its curly tail in a friendly way. It was a black dog with a round white patch on its forehead. As he looked across the filthy waiting hall, Ka saw three teenage boys, who were beckoning the dog with sesame rolls.

There was a long silence. A feeling of peace rose up inside Ka. They were so far from the center of the world, one couldn’t even imagine going there, and as he fell under the spell of the snowflakes that seemed to hang in the sky outside, he began to wonder if he had entered a world without gravity. When everyone had ceased to pay any attention to him, another poem came to Ka.

The poem was made up of many of the thoughts that had come to him all at once a short while earlier: the falling snow, cemeteries, the black dog running happily around the station building, an assortment of childhood memories, and the image that had lured him back to the hotel: Ipek. How happy it made him just to imagine her face—and also how terrified! He called the poem “Snow.”

Much later when he thought about how he’d written this poem, he had a vision of a snowflake; this snowflake, he decided, was his life writ small; the poem that had unlocked the meaning of his life, he now saw sitting at its center. But – just as the poem itself defies easy explanation – it is difficult to say how much he decided at that moment and how much of his life was determined by the hidden symmetries this book is seeking to unveil. Before finishing the poem, Ka went silently to the window and watched the scene outside: the large snowflakes floating so elegantly through the air. He had the feeling that simply by watching the snow fall he would be able to bring the poem to its predetermined end” (Pamuk 2005).

The relay for ubimage is that becoming-poem occurs in the midst of life experience, and that it makes itself known through augmented perception, memory, imagination, feeling—an emotional intensification associated with revelation. This dimension of ordinary moments in everyday life is the one opened to ontological construction of well-being in electracy. Ubimage is a practice for accomplishing these events, distributed through konsult, to gather an army for well-being through an intensity of shared feeling.

With nine locations along the Peace Line in West Belfast, *Peace Doors*, shown in Fig. 3.7, addresses the ongoing conflict between the Catholic and Protestant communities there. The Peace Line is constructed of walls, fences, industrial complexes and even a shopping mall, designed to separate the Protestant Shankill neighborhood to the north from the Catholic Falls Road neighborhood to the south. The first Peace Line barriers were built in 1969, following the outbreak of the Northern Ireland riots and “The Troubles”. They were built as temporary structures because they were indeed meant to be temporary, lasting only 6 months, but due to their effective nature they have become more permanent, wider and longer across the city.



Fig. 3.7 *Peace Doors* by John Craig Freeman, Along the Peace Line, West Belfast, 2010, Augmented reality public art

3.10 Rationale

Here is an outline of the logic motivating this collection of experiments.

I. Dromosphere

- Frame: Konsult proposes a practice of citizen participation adequate to the conditions of the dromosphere (dimension collapse) theorized by Paul Virilio. Virilio argues convincingly that the light-speed of the digital apparatus has made possible (inevitable) a General Accident that occurs everywhere simultaneously.
- Dimension pollution compresses time-space into Now, challenging literate formations of individual critical thinking and the democratic public sphere. This challenge is the crisis alluded to in the name of the consultancy – EmerAgency, whose motto is: “Problems B Us.” Dromos (race) consists of three positions (moments, opportunities, openings): start, turn, finish. Konsult practices *Turn* (trope).

II. Prudence

- Konsult draws upon the experience of Arts and Letters traditions with immediate intuitive judgment to formulate *flash reason* as the logic needed for deliberation (community decision-making) in the dromosphere.
- Prudence (Aristotle’s *phronesis*) is the virtue of good judgment. A person with good judgment is able (*posse*) – in the midst of an ongoing situation – to draw upon past experience to make the right decision about how to act

that brings about the best outcome for the community. In oral culture this kind of judgment on the fly was associated with *metis*, a skill of *savoir-faire* demonstrated in its purest style in the conduct of a race.

- *Kairos* is the mode of temporality proper to *metis* (the term refers to the weaver's art of throwing the shuttle at just the right moment). Kairotic time displaces cyclical (oral) and linear (literate) models of time to become the primary temporality in electracy.

III. Flash Reason

- The lightning flash of insight (intuition, inspiration) has been fully theorized in Western thought, especially with respect to Moment (*Augenblick*). Moment is taken up in konsult as the answer to Now crisis. Sudden thought draws together all human faculties to take in a situation in one (augmented) glance. The limits of this glance relative to the human sensorium are codified as "beauty," however that experience may be understood in a given culture. The invention of Aesthetics as a separate faculty at the beginnings of electracy (Kant et al.) recognized and anticipated the challenge to Moment in the notion of the sublime. The conditions of the industrial city are sublime, producing shock experience of alienation, reification, objectification, in which denizens lose connection with agency (with the categories of experience: space, time, cause).
- The arts take up the dynamics of Moment, focusing on a poetics of epiphany. Epiphany (secularized revelation) is the formal structure of flash reason, transformed in Romanticism (German Idealism) as the "crisis poem" (Harold Bloom), reconfiguring the operations of allegory and symbol, promoting tropology as supplement of inference and narrative as primary skills of the cultural interface. The project evolved across the arts, leading to a new structural mode of correspondences addressing the disjunction of microcosm/macrocosm in the city.
- Relevant versions of epiphany include Baudelaire's correspondences, Rimbaud's illuminations, Rilke's world-inner-space, Eliot's objective correlative. Proust (involuntary memory) and Joyce (epiphany) extended the function to the novel, as did Brecht (gestus, V [A] effect) and Artaud (cruelty) in theater. Freud's transference, Benjamin's dialectical image, and Merleau-Ponty's flesh are key instances of theoretical elaboration of flash reason.

IV. Mechanical Reproduction

- Manifesting a certain (happy) correlation across the levels of the apparatus, the invention of photography makes available one of the new supports of communication displacing alphabetic writing in the electracy economy. Photography was just the first in a series of major innovations lending technological augmentation to the sensorium, continuing today in digital

computing (Web 3.0). Smartphones equip the sensorium for sublime conditions. The filmic shot is kairotic. The insight of apparatus theory is that a general electracy must be developed as institution and practice to coordinate digital equipment with flash reason.

- The aesthetics of Moment was formulated in photography by Henri Cartier-Bresson's "decisive moment" (shooting *a la sauvette*). This design principle has a long history in the visual arts, with painters choosing the telling instance of an action to lend a narrative dimension to a picture. The principle reaches its theoretical completion in Gestalt psychology and phenomenology – the principle of *Prägnanz*: the combination of expectation and perception to produce default continuities or groupings in experience. Gestalt manifests the limitations of glance, inadequate to dromospheric sublime that becomes formless (information sprawl).
- Avant-garde poetics invented during this same period (nineteenth-century Paris), whose prototype is Duchamp's readymades, such as "Fountain," extended Kant's Judgment to include the automatism of the snapshot. Chance as a formal device, coordinated with recording equipment and flash poetics, were integrated in support of a new attitude towards everyday life, beyond both knowledge and will (the constitutive stands of Pure and Practical Reason).
- Theoretical complements of vanguard poetics include Georges Bataille's *informe* (formless), Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome (swarm), Lacan's stain, and related engagements with sprawl complexity.

After the 2007 shootings at Virginia Tech, you may remember the commentary that was published in the New Yorker, about the heartbreaking experience of the police carrying the bodies out of the classrooms while the cellphones in the victim's pockets and backpacks kept ringing. *School Shootings eMorial*, shown in Fig. 3.8, consists of an augmented reality scene including a virtual replica of the Sandy Hook School sign, 20 backpacks representing each of the students and six apples representing each of the teachers and staff who lost their life in the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Connecticut on December 14, 2012. When people approach the backpacks cell phone ringing sounds are triggered.

3.11 Quasi-Object

Ubiquitous imaging–ubimage signifies within a digitally supported logic in the apparatus of electracy. There is a backpack (for example), an object ubiquitous as a commodity, a quasi-object (extimate entity, simulacrum) circulating for its use and exchange value, becoming signifier. Follow the trace (inference path): Cell phones were heard ringing in the backpacks of students murdered at Virginia Tech (04/16/2007). The backpacks of the children slaughtered at Sandy Hook Elementary



Fig. 3.8 *School Shootings eMorial* by John Craig Freeman with Gregory L. Ulmer, National Mall just west of the U.S. Capitol Building, Washington DC, 2013, Augmented reality public art

School in Newtown, CT (12/14/2012) were designed for the imaginations of 6-year-olds, perhaps already beyond the whimsy of Dora the Explorer and her backpack friend. Backpacks were the disguise of choice by the Chechen brothers for the IEDs targeting the Boston Marathon finish line, detonated by a connection between a cell phone and a toy car (04/15/2013). Chechen separatists took hostage 1,100 people (777 children) at a school in Beslan, Russian Federation (09/01/2004). Of the 334 killed in the 3-day siege, 186 were children. There is a certain inference trace passing through these events, bringing into appearance an opposition, a fundamental violence, archetypal, an irreducible polarity throwing apart two apparatuses – Oral and Alphabetic, Religion and Science. The emblem is made explicit in the name of a group responsible for burning down a school in Nigeria, murdering 29 students and a teacher (07/06/2013): *Boko Haram, The classroom as Frontier*. Recall the Khmer Rouge, the genocide of the killing fields of Cambodia (1975–1978, 1.7 million dead), in which anyone suspected of being educated was murdered. Is there a pattern gathering this path into a pathology? Is the Reign of Terror native to modernity (France 09/05/1793–07/28/1794): the guillotine (16,594 executions)? An eMorial translates one-at-a-time disasters into a public sacrifice on behalf of a national value. In the United States from 1960 to 2013, 1.3 million Americans have died from gun violence. These dead are commemorated today, martyrs to the Second Amendment to the Constitution, honored as members of a Minute Man Militia (three Americans killed each and every hour, each and every day). A society is measured by what it values.

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