

5 OBSERVING THE TURBINE HALL
THROUGH *flickr*:
PLAY, BEHAVIOUR AND SCALE

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Introduction

'The reason for visiting a place may have nothing to do with its architecture, however within a touristic frame, architecture is always at play. Architecture will provide context even when it is not the primary object of display'. This statement by MacCannell (2006, p. 21) can be turned around when applied to Tate Modern's Turbine Hall. The trouble with Tate Modern is that the Turbine Hall space *is* the primary object of display, much to the curators' consternation. Mori, the agency charged to compile statistical data on visitor demographic and numbers concluded in 2009 that 37% of visitors to Tate Modern stated that their primary reason for visiting was to view the building.



Figure 1. Turbine Hall, *Shibboleth* installation (Corinna Dean, 2008).

The spatial supremacy of the Turbine Hall is constantly reiterated throughout the literature on it. The Turbine Hall, measuring 155 metres by 35 metres, is deemed one of the most successful elements of Tate Modern. The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment's (CABE) response to a submitted planning document for Phase 2 of Tate Modern underlined the crucial position of the space, 'the primacy of the Turbine Hall should be enforced' (CABE, 2006). In *Tate Modern: The First Five Years*, published five years after the opening of the galleries in 2000, the critic Martin Gayford states that 'the most startling and novel feature (of Tate Modern) was the huge cavern of the Turbine Hall'. Uniquely this scaled up forecourt was designated a 'publicly accessible' space at the planning stage by the London Borough of Southwark. It is therefore subject to the by-laws that regulate public space.



Figure 2. Turbine Hall, *Shibboleth* installation (Corinna Dean, 2008).

In order to develop a methodology to assess how the public interprets and engages with the space - both emotionally and physically - I will combine and analyse three categories: play, behaviour and scale. These illustrate what I believe to be common themes of images of the Turbine Hall posted on *flickr* (the social networking and image sharing site). For the most part, the images that I will analyse are postings of the *Unilever Series* of installations in the Turbine Hall.¹ Sponsored by the Dutch consumer manufacturer, the *Unilever Series* has committed funding until 2012. These works, which transform the space, have varied from the contemplative - which also reveal as much about the void of the space as the actual installation piece (as in *Shibboleth*, Doris Salcedo, 2007) - to an enactment of spectacle, exemplified by *The Weather Project* (Ólafur Eliasson, 2003). Through the three selected themes, I aim to demonstrate the relation between intention (curatorial emphasis of the Unilever series), public space (architecture) and interpretation (behaviour) to articulate a definition of public space of the Turbine Hall as mediated by its visitors. The medium of *flickr* incorporates visual representations of varied individual experiences, as well as collective responses evidenced through the shared platform of the internet, to produce a reading of the Turbine Hall, which transgresses the boundaries of formal curatorial statements, programmed intentions and presents the more informal and unpredictable responses of the public.

This paper is part of a larger thesis that examines the social and cultural regeneration of the surrounding area, branded 'Bankside' as part of a marketing exercise carried out by the London Borough of Southwark's Department of Regeneration and the Environment established in 1996 to oversee the build up of activities within the area due to the future arrival of Tate Modern. The paper aims to arrive at a definition of public space within Tate Modern's Turbine Hall through the use of *flickr* images as primary source material. In the context of critical literature on the effects of cultural regeneration, Evans (2005) draws our attention to the limitations of current methodologies. In addition Evans draws attention to the lack of architectural critique, beyond initial media coverage, that presents a reading of combined social and spatial perspectives of the design. Evans argues that there is a need for broader 'methodologies, which bring together approaches across anthropology, sociology, cultural and urban studies'. With reference to a design report carried out by CABE (2000), urban design quality indicators (DQI's) were identified to create assessment criteria based on 'the need to draw on more social, observational and qualitative approaches of the user experience'. I will refer to the conceptual framework that de Certeau (1988) discusses that uses 'inquiries and hypotheses' to investigate 'ways of operating as not merely [descriptions of] the obscure background of social activity but to reveal the intricacies and relevance of social activity acted out against the background of the institution' (de Certeau, 1988, p. xiv) here Tate Modern. I will use the *flickr* images as visual investigations into the overlap of social and spatial forms and processes.

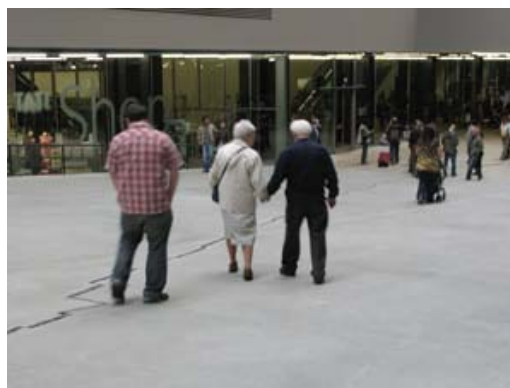


Figure 3. Turbine Hall (Corinna Dean, 2008).

A public place?



Figure 4. Turbine Hall, *Shibboleth* installation (courtesy of *flickr* contributor Maxo, 2008).

On regularly trawling through the *flickr* site, between September 2008 and February 2009 I found approximately 6459 tagged images some - of immense beauty – framing different personal experiences of the Turbine Hall. Some were professionally constructed and had strong composition and lighting effects and others suggest awareness of contemporary art, for example the human sculptures that recreate the Austrian artist's Erwin Wurm's 'one minute human sculptures'. Others simply document a fleeting event such as a *flash mob*² demonstration. Many of the images demonstrate an engagement with the temporary display of 'illusion' within the Turbine Hall.



Figure 5. 'Images of a Time Traveller' (courtesy of *flickr* contributor Lady Vervaine, 2009).

The play of narratives of illusion applied to the space of the Turbine Hall through the curated programme of installations recalls the writings of Foucault and his theory on heterotopias. Foucault (1967) theorised that heterotopias, which exist outside the realm of the real, could be divided into different categories: crisis (sanatorium, refugee centre), deviance (prison) and illusion (fairgrounds). Often discussed as agents for managing change or deviant behaviour, the outcomes of these heterotopias as social experiments rooted in place could then be filtered or applied to the spaces and institutions of everyday life. Shane (2002), in his application of the theory of heterotopias to contemporary urban planning,

distinguishes heterotopias of illusion from those of crisis and deviance. The former comprise realms of apparent chaos with creative, imaginative freedom in which change is concentrated and accelerated. The rules governing the local system's organisation can quickly and arbitrarily change, highlighting values of pleasure and leisure, consumption and display, not work. Actors in heterotopias of illusion work primarily with images to create norms and attractors, yet they can have disciplinary codes in reverse. Here Shane cites Las Vegas casinos as an example, such as the 'New York, New York' Casino with its replication of the New York skyline. Casinos employ various scenographic urban elements as attractors, but have extensive security organisations, which impose gambling etiquette and social rules. If Tate Modern can be discussed as a heterotopia of illusion, it could be argued that the *Unilever Series* has been dominated with installations that are described as creating spectacle over more self-reflective art, a criticism that has been levelled at the *Unilever Series*.

If Tate Modern is to be read along the lines of heterotopian models, I would suggest that the organisation is seeking to manage change within the cultural sector, with the intention of embracing new audiences aligned with experimental installation practices, to create and push a dynamic level of experience. The paper aims to highlight the limitations of these experiences as mediated through the curatorial programme and the ambitions of a public institution. Nicholas Serota, Director of Tate Galleries stresses his belief that 'the experience mediated within the gallery should avoid a formulaic sense of experience' (Serota, 2000, p. 54). The agenda of the *Unilever Series* appears to demonstrate little engagement with institutional or socio-political critique, which is one of the premises that initially underlay installation art. In contrast the installation *State Britain* (2007) by the Turner Prize winning artist Mark Wallinger, exhibited in the Duveen Galleries at Tate Britain demonstrated a powerful political critique of Britain's involvement in the Iraq war. The *Unilever Series* creates a temporary suspension of the everyday, within the vessel of the architecture of the power station. The relationship between the art installation and the monumentalism of the Turbine Hall has been argued around the critique of scaling up of art works as concomitant with the increased size of contemporary galleries. Meyer stresses this argument in his 2004 article *No More Scale: The Experience of Size in Contemporary Sculpture* as 'symptomatic of a recent international trend of the execution of ever-larger art commissions for increasingly vast spaces such as the Grand Palais's 'Monumenta', from the Guggenheim to Dia: Beacon in New York'. Meyer expands on this theme which is centred around 'the art world's demand of an art of size; an outcome of the art world's spectacularisation and expansionism' (Meyer, 2004, p. 12). Focusing on Eliasson's *The Weather Project*, Meyer states that it did not achieve an active and self-reflexive spectator rather it delivered 'a mass audience that cannot fail to be overwhelmed by the magnitude of the installation itself'. Morgan, the curator of Carsten Höller's *Test Site*, the seventh *Unilever Series* installation defends the criticism of spectacularisation directed at the installations, stating that the Turbine Hall has enabled a conversion in architecture and experience 'the Turbine Hall can be seen as a relatively minor platform, a modest beginning for the wide-scale transformation of behaviour, and most of all, experience' (Morgan, 2007, p. 15). Meyer's critique has been criticised for over simplifying the notion that large spaces represent a flexing of global might on the part of international art institutions.



Figure 6. Image of a Marsyas Installation (courtesy of flickr contributor CityWalker, 2002).

The status of the Turbine Hall can be viewed as representative of a privileged order of power in the city. It is programmed by an eminent group of international curators, conditioned by particular funding situations, and has a public mandate arising from its government funded status. The gallery's heritage is brought about by its long association with 'high culture' whilst simultaneously Tate trustees' highlight their 'aim to advance its local, national and international position' (Tate Report, 2002). In my interviews with local residents on the neighbouring social and mixed-tenure housing estates, while a number of respondents admired and were proud of the building only a few said that they had actually visited the gallery. Residents view Tate Modern's community garden project adjacent to the gallery's north façade as a more familiar useable space.

The Turbine Hall as a public space, defined by an institution, as opposed to those spaces within its immediate urban context, public space as mediated through the everyday, is disengaged from the normal behaviour of the public as played out on the street or the park. The competition brief aimed to embed the building within its physical surrounding. Tate Modern's architects Herzog & de Meuron's competition entry presentation included a description of the ambition that it be a place which encompasses the city's conflux of activity, 'an urban passage for all people including those not visiting the building's principal purpose' (Tate Gallery archive, 12/4/6). To emulate a public street appeared to be one of the principal aims, with the implied aim of democratising the space. Jacques Herzog talks about the importance of three elements working together to achieve the aim of a public space: the ramp, the bridge and part of the Turbine Hall coming together which will be 'characterised by public life, the museum visitors will be able to stroll about and communicate as they would do on an ordinary street' (Ryan Moore, 2000, p. 38). But the space, in contrast to a street has become one of a destination site and not necessarily a transitional one due to the installations. What is clear is that the space begins to perform on many levels; as defined by each *Unilever Series*, which provides an ever-changing scenography. The space is written about under the scrutiny of the media seeking to gauge public opinion. Morgan, sums up this analysis of criticism levelled at the mere visceral experience as 'oddly perverse to insist on an experience of art as limited to a certain scale or to a particular type of appreciation' (Morgan, 2007, p. 12).

Flickr, folksonomy³ and use

With reference to de Certeau's enquiry as to what use is made by the 'common people' of the culture disseminated and imposed by the 'elites' producing the language? (de Certeau, 1998, p. xiv), this analysis appears pertinent to the use and interpretation of the Turbine Hall through the observation of *flickr* images. In its constant transformations through the *Unilever Series* and other curated exhibitions, the 'cultural language' has been viewed as pushing the spectacular as well as delivering a new level of experience within the public arena. The public arena is the result of a mediation between the public, architecture and the 'programme' as defined by the institution.



Figure 7. Image of *Shibboleth* installation (courtesy of *flickr* contributor CityWalker, 2008).

In discussing the transformation of public life, Sennett describes the fragmentation of society as 'a society of atomised social spaces', and any materials which this culture offer people to use to 'connect' are 'unstable symbols of impulse and intention' (Sennett, 1977, p. 309). This Sennett argues leads to an over heightened expression of hyped-up emotions, 'that the terms of culture have come to be so arranged that, without some forcing and prodding, real social bonds seem so unnatural' (Sennett, 2007, p. 309). In view of Sennett's statement it could be argued that the Turbine Hall positions itself as one of the aforementioned atomised spaces, the building still turns its back on the poorer south side of the site and the *Unilever Series* seeks to evoke emotions within the visitor. Probably the most significant shift in the display of emotion is that in the past the relationship between an art work and spectator was a private one. The nature of the architecture meant that the visitor was not intended to be observed, in the case of the Turbine Hall the visitor is on view, becoming at times part of the art work, whether willingly complicit or by default the anonymity normally associated with public life is largely challenged.



Figure 9. Image of Turbine Hall installation (courtesy of *flickr* contributor JudyGr 2003).



Figure 10. Image of light boxes in the Turbine Hall (courtesy of *flickr* contributor David 2004).

While the images on *flickr* demonstrate unconventional social behaviour there appears to be limited interactivity. An image of Ollie, a young child taking his first steps, seems to be a very potent private family moment acted out against the colossus of the Turbine Hall; perhaps it is the potency of overlaying the private onto the public that makes it a powerful, popular image, and the kind of social interactivity is created through the dialogue on *flickr*. Here we witness the private seeping into the public sphere.



Figure 11. 'Image of First Steps, Ollie in the Turbine Hall' (courtesy of *flickr* contributor jkottke, 2008).

Why *flickr*?

The analysis of *flickr* images as a reading of the Turbine Hall provides an alternative to published images of the installations. They act as a survey of people's responses to the spaces and demonstrate a series of relations between the installations, the visitors and the space. *Flickr* not only provides an interesting empirical base for an analysis of the Turbine Hall, but also is an example of locating a virtual social networking site through common responses to a real-time physical environment. Visitors are individually experiencing the space but using this experience to form a social networking site of shared interest.

The growth of the use of *flickr* is worth noting as it provides an interesting insight into a certain type of visitor to Tate Modern. In a survey carried out by the American statistical analysis company Rapleaf, the majority of users (38%) were aged between 25 years and 34 years (Rapleaf Business, 2008). All clustering, grouping and stratifying of information on the *flickr* users' entries are led by the user. The adoption of *Version 2 Open Source Media* means that all exchange of software is two way, you can upload as well as down load and the use of API⁴ technology provides the user with a programming language used to build the structure of accessibility and availability. This autonomous use of software and ability of the user to create their own software might be seen as an instance of de Certeau's (1998) comments on systems of technology being appropriated or subsumed by the 'common person' in order to represent their own goals or interests.

The architecture of the *flickr* site therefore allows the classification interface to be driven by the user. This allows for a more personal communication interface and, when socialing online, more adhoc clustering behaviour. Mislove et al (2004) in the paper *Growth of the flickr Social Network*, look at the nature of growth dynamics and identify significant local clustering, involving building on communication through continuous link exchange, building up relationships beyond one hit, and creating a virtual localised network.

Play



Figure 12. Image of *Test Site* installation (courtesy of *flickr* contributor Ades, 2007).

The images that I have categorised in this section largely illustrate a sense of physical enjoyment of the space, or, at least, that a visceral engagement is apparent. The seventh *Unilever Series* installation, *Test Site* (2007), by Carsten Höller, is conceptually based on the theme of play in society and culture, manifested by installing a series of slides from each of the gallery floors down to the ramp. The German artist engages with the theme of play in his wider body of work. In addition to slides, he has made goggles through which you see the world upside down, carousels and rooms with amanita mushrooms growing down from the ceiling. His work challenges the viewer's conventional perception and aims to disconcert the viewer and challenge their notion of space (Morgan, 2006).

In *Homo Ludens* (1934), Huizinga sets out the significant features of play: 'play is free, is in fact freedom, play is not ordinary or real life, play is distinct from ordinary life both as to locality and duration' (Huizinga, 1934, p. 12) Huizinga suggests that play is central to and a necessary condition for the generation of culture.



Figure 13. Image of *Test Site* installation (courtesy of *flickr* contributor Orhan Tsoiak, 2007).

The use of slides is historically traced in the exhibition catalogue in Kozlovsky's piece, *A Short History of the Slide* (2007). Based on an emotional response to the slide related to Sigmund Freud's speculation on the existence of a death instinct as a counterforce to the sexual instinct, Kozlovsky raises the question of whether the slide represents humanity's instinctual ambition to overcome fear or its innate desire to self-destruct. In response to Holler's installation he states: 'Many interpretations abound, including that the kinetic-repetition of users engaging with the art work is set in opposition to a disciplinary space recollecting school playgrounds. *Test Site* is explained by subjecting our bodies to an entirely other yet familiar sensorial regime. Its intention is to create a new relationship between art and sensation and a sense of liberation within a public space' (Kozlovsky, 2007, p. 46).

The online conversation below taken from flickr illustrates a reciprocal relationship between the visitor and the art works, this is a feature of installation art - that the viewer becomes embodied as opposed to disembodied in the conventional act of looking. Some flickr users appeared to express fixed ideas as to what art might be, especially within the institutional framework of Tate Modern. The physical qualities of the building made the work possible and the legitimacy of the artist's previous works gave authority to the display of play. Visitors' enjoyment and thrill in using the slides displayed an emotion that is normally experienced outside of the gallery. The behaviour became normalised, but suggestions in the catalogue that play becomes a consideration within urban planning and that slides be seen as potential for low energy forms of transport as proposed in the catalogue essay *Slides in the Public Realm* (Test Site, 2006), unfortunately, as yet to be tried out in the urban sphere.

Some visitors who looked for a more conventional artistic experience were drawn to comment on the dramatic nature of the shadows cast by the slides on to the walls of the Turbine Hall. At times there appears to be a disparity between the conceptual ideas and the interpretation of the works.

The conversation below was posted on the Tate Galleries group web-site set up by flickr users to discuss images in relation to Tate Modern.

Diane says:

On my rare visits to Tate Modern I've come away with the impression that we are part of the art. I look at the world differently after going there.

Commonorgarden says:

We went on a Thursday at midday and got tickets for 3pm - the queues were not too bad and yes I did go down all the slides. It was 'cool'. The addition of the lights which cast shadows onto the walls at the far end of the turbine hall make them seem more 'art', I think, and it is great that people are 'engaging' with the piece - it is not often you see so many teenagers around and so much laughter.

I hope this 'hard to reach new audience' (you can tell I work in the arts!) remembers about the rest of the gallery and visits it as well...

Commonorgarden says:

Oh - remember that the installations in the turbine hall are funded by Unilever rather than the public purse.

Alex J White says:

I went the other evening, but could only get on the small slide. The others were fully booked. I'm going on the members' night on the 3rd December. Anyone else going then? If art is meant to affect your emotions then, it certainly succeeds on this front.

Mags says:

I think they have a timed ticketing system in place, and guards to make sure no-one cheats etc. I think I'll brave the one from the bridge to the floor before risking the top floor one.

One commentator (the Observer, I think) pointed out that it's an installation which both makes use of the full space and can be responded to 'naturally' by visitors. In the same way that when the Weather Project was in the 'natural' reaction was to wander about then lie down and 'sunbathe'. We know how to respond to slides: fear, attraction, and fascination. We react physically - butterflies in the stomach, screaming, laughing - as well as mentally.

I'll be going along, but in a month or so, when the immediate fuss is over.

www.flickr.com/groups/tate_galleries/discuss/72157594319779274/
(accessed 04 February 2009).



Figure 14. Image of *Shibboleth* installation
(courtesy of flickr contributor Mat Gibson, 2008).

Shibboleth, the eighth *Unilever Series* installation by the Columbian born artist Doris Salcedo, is intended to be a starting point for critical debate that 'actually and metaphorically opens a critical space that runs right through the heart of Tate Modern' (Bochardt-Hume, 2008 p.17). Salcedo's work deals with political themes and geo-political territories and the titles of her work are significant to the reading of the installations. Salcedo's piece was dubbed the 'crack', perhaps a sign that people warmed to it and personalized it.

The curator Bockhardt-Hume emphasised the importance of contextualising the piece within the history of the museum and gallery, which represent 'repositories of history, they are intimately connected to the ideology of nationhood' (Bockhardt-Hume, 2008, p. 17). The themes of the piece - which attempted to open the debate between post colonialism and the new cultural globalism's search for developing markets - became perhaps somewhat lost in the illusionary effect of *Shibboleth*'s

materiality. Undoubtedly, within the context of the other *Unilever Series* installations, a somewhat tight framework of critique had been set, that of promoting unconventional behavior and spectacle. The piece was skillfully executed and this aspect of it seemed to clearly be communicated through *flickr*. Fascination with the detail of the cavity was conveyed through the images: was it slicing away part of the physical construction of this great edifice to hegemonic art practice? Some visitors observed the crack in detail, but it also acted as a directional path and people appeared to feel compelled to move along its trajectory. Arguably, the intervention at ground level increased the non-prescriptive enjoyment or encounter with the space, allowing an open narrative to unravel. Other images literally played with a 'Hollywood special effects' reading of the piece, but related to the fact that it left the void of the building physically intact. Other images illustrate a sense of serenity in the absence of a grandiose installation.



Figure 15. Image of *Shibboleth* installation (courtesy of *flickr* contributor Dan Tassel 2009).

Behaviour

In his contemporary revision of Foucault's theories of heterotopias, Shane (2005) discusses how the categories of crisis, deviance, discipline on the one hand, and illusion on the other, act to maintain order in the overall system and thereby constrain change. However, the former (crisis etc) is moved outside the centre of the city while the latter is located anywhere within the fabric of the city. Foucault pointed to this geographic shift in his 'heterotopolgy', citing the cemetery's migration from the churchyard to a suburban location, becoming a garden or park in the process. The Turbine Hall is a space removed from the conventional formal behavioural code of a gallery. Although Tate Modern is now viewed at the core of the city's activities, the building's typology borrows from the sites of out of town industrial spaces, such as Donald Judd's de-mobbed army shed in Marfa Texas, which Serota admires as a key exemplar of a contemporary art gallery, or those other warehouses often found on the fringe of urban centres such as the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London's east end. At Tate Modern, the reverse is the case: the disused industrial power station, decommissioned since 1984, has now become part of London's central core, causing not only London's art geography to shift but to

significantly re-align the urban centrality of London, a 'world city'. Stephen Hepworth, director of the Jerwood Art Space (a contemporary arts centre and rehearsal space set up by the Jerwood Foundation and based near Tate Modern) made an astute prognosis of the impact of Tate Modern in 1997. He said that 'The arrival of Tate Modern will first and foremost alter the art geography of London. Then, over a five-year period, it will impact nationally and internationally and cause other institutions to redefine their roles' (2000).

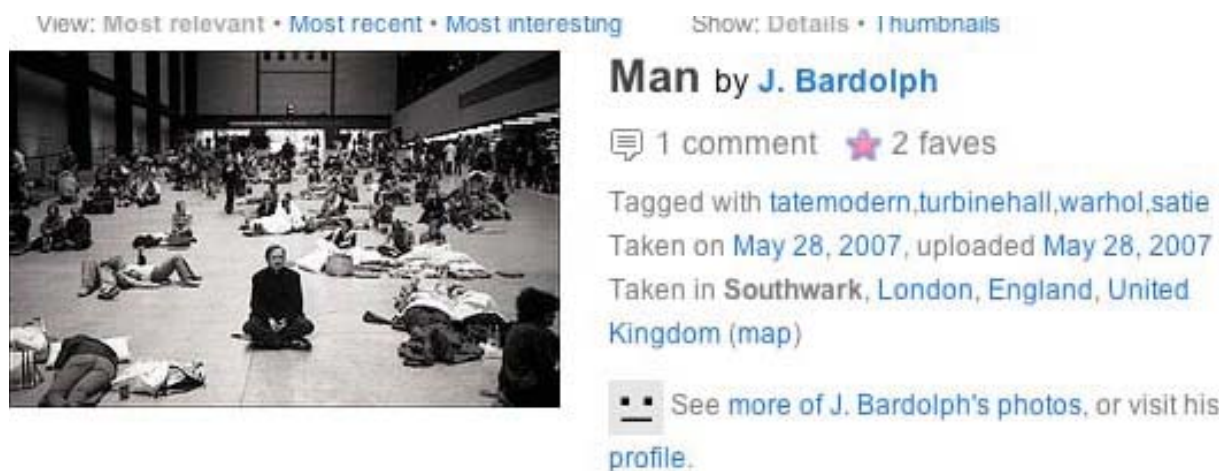


Figure 16. Image of *Long Weekend* (courtesy of *flickr* contributor J. Bardolph 2007).

In the *flickr* images of the mixed media performance tilted *Warhol/Cage/Satie*, May 2007 on first glance the Turbine Hall looks like it has been taken over by London's homeless, with sleeping bags randomly placed on the ramp. On closer inspection, it turns out to be a concert with music by John Cage, Erik Satie and Michael Nyman to accompany Andy Warhol's first film *Sleep* with a running time of five and a half hours. This is a temporary enactment for a fixed duration of time. Bankside is host to many historical charities such as the Blackfriars Settlement and St Mungo's, but for these, homelessness in the city is a reality. Again this references Foucault's heterotopia of illusion that transforms a place over a limited period of time and then is returned to its status quo.

Interestingly, Morgan (2007) cites the problem with the increased number of visitors, likening the way of dealing with the crowds to the type of crowd control associated generally only with buildings such as stadium and airports. Queuing for Carsten Höller's slides became part of the experience with delicately formed queues creating a camber type arrangement through the gallery for those looking down. The length of queuing was then alleviated through a ticketing system. This queuing management brings to mind the skills developed by Disney world which alleviates the potential boredom of visitors by hiring entertainers to entertain those waiting in line.



Figure 17. Image of *The Weather Project* installation (courtesy of flickr contributor platdujour, 2007).

The space gained currency by appearing repeatedly on the front cover of the broadsheet newspapers. In June 2007 for example, Tony Blair was pictured delivering a speech of government policy and the arts against the backdrop of Holler's Test Site piece in the Turbine Hall. In a Guardian newspaper article entitled *The Secret Diary of a Museum Attendant* (2004) Adrian Hardwick (Head of Visitor Services) discussed the supposedly organised groups visiting the space during Eliasson's Weather Project. Visitors performed modest protests such as writing political slogans with their bodies saying things like 'Bush Go Home'. This was mirrored on the reflective temporary ceiling that hung from the hall. The significance of a group of one hundred visitors dressed as Santa no one quite knows, but the 'flash mob' happening in 2007 demonstrated the tolerance or 'otherness' of the Tate Modern organisation. The previous 'flash mob' event at Victoria Station, London in 2007 with 4,000 revellers was curtailed by four vans of policeman - due to the nuisance caused to travellers. On interviewing Hardwick (September, 2008) on the level of tolerance and the lack of visible security checks at the door, he implied that they adhere to security directives as stipulated by the DCMS, but the lack of visible security is clearly part of an image of a space that operates outside of over-surveilled areas of the public realm.



Figure 18. Image of Santa invasion during *The Weather Project* installation (courtesy of flickr contributor Patchworkbunny 2007).



Snapshot of a photographer, taking picture of herself and of the Holler installation, and the Museum shop in the background (both not visible in the photo) at the Turbine Hall, Tate Modern, London

Figure 19. Image of The Turbine Hall (courtesy of *flickr* contributor Jan 2006).

SocietyWork's posting of a couple lying down on the ramp with the quote 'is that normal in London, to lie down in a public space when you feel tired' demonstrates the questioning of 'conventional' codes of behaviour. Morgan (2007) argues in defence of high visitor numbers suggesting a more popular experience than a contemplative, this is relevant to the gallery's traditional mandate of publicness as 'historically being at the heart of its mission', arguing for the potential of another experience over that of the traditionalist contemplative experience of art. The condition of the Turbine Hall appears to be a test lab for a divergence of experience. The convergence of the architecture, the Unilever Series which in part respond to the monumentalism of the space but also to this stated condition of 'public space' and the over lapping of assumed behaviour, passive and active that creates a diversity of activities and behaviour.



Figure 20. 'Absorption' (courtesy of *flickr* contributor **Kiem Tang**, 2009).

McKinsey and Co, the consultant charged with producing the feasibility study for Tate Modern at the planning stage, carried out interviews with many heads of staff and trustees. The document titled *Defining the Vision of the Tate Modern*, reflected the divergence of opinions as to how the Turbine Hall would fit with the ethos of the organisation. Some were adamant that 'Tate Gallery of Modern Art should be a place of leisure, where people can see performances, eat, buy works of art and that it should be open at night'. Others state how the gallery should reinforce its synchronic lineage with the institution's history and maintain a place for seriousness and contemplation: that we mustn't allow the 'Tate Gallery of Modern Art' to become a noisy 'palace of fun' (Tate Gallery Archive 12/1/3/2). This reference to the 'Palace of Fun' in turn refers to the architect Cedric Price's (1934–2003) much emulated and lauded project for a creative laboratory of fun, which influenced Rogers and Piano in their design of Paris's Pompidou Centre (1976).



Figure 21. Image of a visitor in the Turbine Hall (courtesy of flickr contributor Tom2, 2004).

Scale

All of the *Unilever Series* can be classified as installation art. Installation art, which developed alongside the art movement Minimalism, is premised on the notion of an active relationship between the art object and the viewer. The art embodies the presence of the viewer, it is temporal and dependent on its context and therefore it principally exists only for as long as it is installed within an exhibition. Scale played an important role in defining this movement, aside from the male prowess exemplified in the making of these large sculptures typified by the robust industrialised material such as cor-ten and rolled steel used by artists such as Anthony Caro and David Smith. Robert Morris in his essay *Notes on Sculpture 2* (1966) reiterates the importance of scale in defining the viewer's relationship to Minimalist art, stating that 'large works dwarf us creating a mode of interaction, while small works encourage privacy and intimacy' (Bishop, 2005, p. 53).



Figure 22. Image of a *Marysus* installation (courtesy of *flickr* contributor aqui-ali, 2002).

Highlighting art's preoccupation with scale, Davidts (2007) argues that the artists of the *Unilever Series*, whilst taking on the scale of the Turbine Hall, and creating impressive scaled or inflated art works, have sacrificed critical analysis of the institution. Herzog & de Meuron's competition entry, used an image of the British Turner Prize winner Rachel Whiteread's art piece *Ghost* (1990) scaled up to the proportion of her work *House* (1993). The placing of the image within a perspective drawing of the Turbine Hall provided a prophetic move that Davidts argued foreshadowed events to come.



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Figure 23. Image of *Shibboleth* Installation (courtesy of *flickr* contributor escobart 2007).

The *flickr* images demonstrate a registering of and sensibility to the scale of the building. The humorous and at times whimsical images from different users, including interventions in which toy soldiers or cartoon figurines placed overlooking *Shibboleth* can be read as the viewer attempting to appropriate the enormous scale of the hall, and express, by means of exaggeration, how we read the space. Dwarfed by the immensity of the site, the visitor brings these Lilliputian sized figures to interact with the installation.



Figure 24. Image of *Shibboleth* (courtesy of *flickr* contributor lightplays 2008).

Accentuated through the building's architecture, the protruding glazed boxes on the fourth level provide vantage points from which to survey the space from above, allowing one to experience the Turbine Hall at different scales much as if one is reading the space as an animated plan. These sites allow the visitor to at once participate in the space but to remove him or herself from the human dimension of interaction in the space.

Finally the installation *Marsyas* (2002) by Anish Kapoor - three concentric rings linked by a PVC membrane which could be interpreted as a grand gestural response to the enormity of the hall - was frequently photographed from a distance, reinforcing the un-human dimensions of the piece. The artist's intention was to immerse the visitor in a monochromatic field of colour; the piece did not provoke interplay or interaction. The visitors in the images were reduced to small size figures that one often views on architectural models, faceless, homogenous people in a crowd.



Figure 25. Image of *Marsyas* installation (courtesy of *flickr* contributor TVicar 2003).



Figure 26. Image of *The Weather Project* installation (courtesy of *flickr* contributor TVicar, 2004).



Figure 27. Image of *Shibboleth* installation (courtesy of flickr contributor DanTassel, 2008).

Conclusions

The images discussed here illustrate how some visitors have adopted more private behaviour within a public space such as lying down on the floor, uninhibited or unaware of the codes of behaviour both formal or implied that are generally advocated within art institutions. This suggests a shift in the reverential interpretation of an art gallery to one of a more causal relationship with the space. Tate Modern appears reluctant to enforce restrictions on the space in order to promote as wide an interpretative experience as possible. The apparent freedom of behaviour permitted within the Turbine Hall is actually underpinned by conventions of behaviour that pertain to many other museums and galleries. The hall almost requires prior knowledge, which is tested and at times subverted.

You would not find visitors lying on the floor of the entrance to the National Gallery, but at Tate Modern this is acceptable behaviour, as is picnicking as you might in a public park or square. But public spaces more commonly attract a cross-section of people from their immediate surroundings. To the north of the site, a link has been created by the Millennium Bridge to the City, (by Foster & Partners with the artist Anthony Caro) which appears largely used by tourists or employees of London's 'Golden Mile'. To the south, a visually impenetrable construction due to the volume and footprint of the building has been created with the development of the commercial complex Bankside 1 2 3. This acts as a physical barrier to the residential estates on the less salubrious south side of Southwark Street.

Foucault cites actors' utopian aspirations as being executed through the rules and goals of an organisation. Certainly the aspirations of Tate Modern seem to be outside of the conventions of many museums and galleries, where the experimental nature of combining the street or urban passage with our received notions of what that typology represents is overlaid with the machinations of Tate, the institution. The analysis has raised what could be viewed as a critical encounter between art, architecture, institution and public where the Turbine Hall has been embraced into the currency of globally significant places.⁵ The capturing and posting of the site through flickr demonstrates its currency as an object of consumption.

By experimenting with change in heterotopic spatial enclaves, urban actors can carry out concrete utopian experiments without endangering the established balance of the larger system. If successful, the model can be exported, copied or altered so that over time it becomes a norm: as mentioned we have yet to see play becoming a significant feature in our urban realm. In fact, the presence of health and safety regulations is increasingly more apparent.

Architecturally the space operates as a vessel that is removed from a conventional typology. It is a crossbreed of typologies, simultaneously an art gallery, public space and 'deconsecrated' industrial monument. The vast vacant space appears void of any immediate code of formal behaviour and it is interesting to observe through the photos how people personalise the space or conduct casual behaviour. Here the institution is creating a new discipline as to how art, commerce, place and society are merging to form new spatial types. The use of flickr images as a form of data to inform a spatial methodology provides a unique pool of visual representation, albeit limited to a particular age group, which illustrates the publics' response to this new form of public space. Tate Modern, has created a space which delicately balances possible tensions and dichotomies of use and ambition; on the one hand; a publicly accessible space with civic urban intention that has to adhere to sponsors' demands and government funding mandate overlaid with curatorial ambitions to expand on the conventional experience of art (as observed through flickr). A new type of activity can be viewed as a 'way of operating' that at times is interpretative, inventive and dynamic although often appealing to the visitor who is initiated and familiar with the global language of the contemporary art gallery.

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Endnotes

¹ Unilever's commitment of £2.25m to the Unilever Series of installations over eight years with Tate Modern has been extended to 2012. The relationship with Tate Modern has enabled them to commission a new installation for the Turbine Hall each year. Unilever's head office is adjacent to Tate Modern and their aim through sponsorship is to enhance London's urban environment in Southwark.

² 'Flash mobs' have certain similarities to political demonstrations, although flash mobs were originally intended to be specifically apolitical. Flash mobs can be seen as a specialised form of smart mob which is a term and concept forwarded by author Howard Rheingold in his 2002 book *Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution*, Perseus Publishing.

³ Flickr Folksonomy (also known as collaborative tagging, social classification, social indexing and social tagging) is the practice and method of collaboratively creating and managing tags to annotate and categorise content. In contrast to traditional subject indexing, metadata is generated not only by experts but also by creators and consumers of the content. Usually, freely chosen keywords are used instead of a controlled vocabulary.

⁴ An application programming interface (API) is a set of routines, data structures, object classes/and/or protocols provided by libraries and /or operating system services in order to support the building of applications.

⁵ In an article from the journal *Wired* titled *The world's most photogenic sites*, according to Flickr it stated 'the most cherished landmark in the world for photographers is the Eiffel Tower, followed by Trafalgar Square. London's next most photographed attraction were the Tate Modern, Big Ben, the London Eye. The data was collated by downloading images and photo metadata from Flickr.com using the website's public API by Cornell University, (27 April, 2009).