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Foreword

by Paul Carter

Scope

The subject of Mark Dorrian's brilliant *Writing on the Image* invites us to question the scope of the book. 'Scope' in common parlance refers to the ambition of the project; it alludes to the overall viewpoint or commanding vision that informs the work. However, Dorrian insists on the occasional nature of the essays gathered here. He consciously resists imposing on them a panoptic unity; but, if they comprise so many different views, what holds them together? A book, especially in these days of alternative electronic print circulation, is a sculptural object of a quite distinctive kind. We are used to understanding the telescope and the microscope as techniques for bringing new classes of phenomena into our visual field – and, in *Writing on the Image*, Dorrian greatly extends the lexicon of scopic equipment, showing how buildings, processions, scenography, and even public art are scopes, or instruments for enhanced seeing. But what about the book? In an environment where the image has largely come to replace the graphic in the language and design of public space, the book that intelligently reflects on these new cultural conditions is a kind of *graphoscope*. It invites us to look at writing.

On this argument *Writing on the Image* is a triumphant success on at least two counts. First, it deploys an extraordinary range of observational acuity, historical imagination and tightly relevant cultural-theoretical contextualisation to bring into view a previously

unsuspected dimension of pre- to post-modern urbanism. Second, by writing across and against the images under discussion, it communicates a critical mind that retains its conviction that good writing remains capable of scoring the image, of defacing, refacing and generally reframing its normative claims. All the objects in Dorrian's book are spectacles in a double sense: they draw attention to themselves in order to bring into focus a new ideological reality. Those prepared for the 1822 royal visit to Edinburgh unfolded before the king's eye: that is, the king was the instrument of visualisation; the world was a projection of his eye, the mimic of its vision. In a similar vein, Dorrian shows how the panoramic gaze or projection sees battlefields and the Clearances. 'The scopic drive of hierarchical systems', as he puts it, is not simply ideological: it is an object of design, of technological manufacture. The Ferris Wheel is an optical device for cinematicising the urban landscape; a kind of image spool. It materialises progress in a prospect. These are not simply observational techniques: they make new observations, much as more of the Moon might be revealed or the interior of the brain. There is no figure/ground in Dorrian's architectonics: the city is a machine for slicing reality into visions, a system of imaginal reconstruction. A colossus like Stalin's Palace points to the unseen: its shadow blots out other visions; verticality is a disguise of oppression, which weighs down gloved as the outline of freedom.

A clue to the scope of *Writing on the Image* is contained in Dorrian's introductory allusion to Theodor Adorno's famous reflections on the essay. The kind of essay that Adorno recommended took its subject from the external world and, in treating it, avoided outmoded claims of totality and continuity. Similarly, Dorrian asks us to consider the complex process of visualisation doubly inherent in the creation of new urban viewpoints and in the documentation of these, and he expects the interruptions between his occasional pieces to convey a critical position, one that is ultimately resistant to all forms of closure – whose blind, conventional connectedness he would, like Adorno, regard as a form of myth. However, the obvious difference between *Writing on the Image* and Adorno's anti-totalising essay (given to montage, almost self-consciously naive), apart from its historical moment, is the fact that Dorrian is collecting his essays. How can this avoid being an act of synthesis and integration, justifying the initial query about the book's scope? And here precisely is the subtle but radical innovation of the book: to bring together without subjecting the contents to the

same scopic drive that Dorrian subtly unpicks in his dazzling analyses. Somehow, a new materiality emerges, where the image becomes available for scoring – where the essay (when multiplied) reclaims a public space that is no longer the projection of powerful interests but that retains a dissident topology of its own.

This emancipatory space is not necessarily antithetical to the constructed views Dorrian describes: it dances with their excesses, their ups and downs, their ins and outs. Every manned armature is a new viewing platform: the conquest of verticality through flight finds its counterpart in the descent through the microscope's lens into the tissue of micro-cosmic reality. Here the panorama is vertical rather than horizontal, and the perspective slides and Dorrian discovers a vertiginous 'symmetry' between interstellar and intercostal space. Dorrian speculates about the acoustic aspect of these topological reformations: what auditorium does the voice-over resonate in? In these meditations the critique of the scopic is supported by the evidence of the other senses, for, inevitably seeing further, or seeing into the mechanism of seeing, risks a kind of nausea, a feedback effect in which the ground dissolves. The conquest of the vertical also produces vertigo: transparency means the immateriality of floors, walls, surfaces in general. It is this movement that City Hall may evoke: the obliquity of a new Keplerian dispensation where the old geometry starts to wobble, like a tottering spinning top. To walk on a photomap is in this sense to maximise the cognitive-physical schizophrenia: what falls away supports us, like walking on glass over excavations.

A therapeutic response to this over-exposure would be reinvestment: a determination to blur, veil – and lift (for it is still the transcendent that is imagined), so that the structure appears to levitate or support its own weight. In these ascendant works, what remains out of sight is the infrastructure, rather as if we would value the great eye of Palomar but forget the Piranesian geometry of gantries, wheels and derricks supporting the lens's celestial scanning. Another expression of this resistance to optimisation is the silent 'howl' of Kapoor's *Marsyas* – 'a cry that, because it extends beyond all relation, must necessarily be rendered through silence'. So the totalisation of the gaze merges into a new kind of *trompe l'oeil* where, once again, seeing is swallowed up in its own myth of transparency. Scaling up and down occur in both time and space: a miniaturised landscape speeds up apprehension and pattern-forming; greater detail delays interpretation. In a way, as control over

the production of the visual field approaches a 1:1 relationship with what is promoted as the real, interpretation becomes less and less possible: the critical stance from which the new world imagery can be placed in perspective risks disappearing.

In the digital image age, which Dorrian examines in the final chapters, coding complicates the Peircean meaning of indexicality. Evidence and visibility merge (and again the role of the voice-over, this time General Powell's, is raised, for the rhetorical argument and vocal production aim at a contouring and mapping of the visible that enhances its impression of seamless connectedness across scales). In such a device absences produce images that are as readable as those produced by the evidence. Perhaps comparably, Google produces the world it seeks to inform: 'the particular genius of Google is that it does not just facilitate the subject's command of information, but that it assembles and delivers it in such a way as to lead to a radical identification with what is given', Dorrian writes. Or, in another register (that of Google Earth), the map writes back, organising an image of alien life for the lunar observer. Again, in this visualisation tool the intermediate real is wholly squeezed out to produce an image more powerful than (say) the night.

And here, in these last essays, the subtle radicalism of Dorrian's own vision emerges, as a strategy for recovering our balance, and retaining access to worlds that can be imagined but not brought into focus by the lens of the eye. What, finally, is the discipline or discourse that resists visual engulfment? The architecture of the *chora*, perhaps sketched in *Blur*, is one of refusals. It refuses to allow things to come into visual focus. This is a clue: but so is the deliberately spreading and non-connected writing. If the radical discovery of Dorrian's book is that the new urbanism will resist the scopic temptation – through the design of buildings (or the *chora*-like refusal of buildings) that refuse to represent, reproduce or otherwise scale up and scale down the world – then his book of essays is the optimal vehicle for announcing this programme. The a-disciplinary architectural practice of refusals can be narrated as another (further expanded) version of an 'architecture of the expanded field', where the field has blurred into the infinitudes of the *chora*. In the lucid sketches of *Writing on the Image*, Dorrian not only reaches a conclusion that rehabilitates the human gesture – not least the swerve of design – he finds a way to negotiate the fascination of the megalopolis and its rhetorical devices whilst also seeing through its assault on the

visual. A non-spectacular *chora* is recovered, one available again for exploration: as a *vade mecum* to this shadowing realm, Dorrian's new book is exemplary.

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Introduction

This book brings together a series of 12 essays written over as many years. Although occasional, in that most were developed in response to specific requests and invitations and were often shaped in important ways by their time of writing, they are linked together by persistent thematic concerns and interests that intertwine throughout the collection. The chapters span both historical and contemporary material, tending to focus – as the subtitle of the collection indicates – on concerns related to architecture and the city, a focus that in turn takes its place within the larger question of the politics of representation. Each of the essays addresses and reflects upon cultural artefacts of one kind or another (images, texts, buildings, artworks, films, performances, digital interfaces, etc.), seeking to interpret their meanings, implications and effects in a critical but expansive way. The manner in which objects operate in culture – and indeed the kinds of experience to which they give rise – is inevitably complex and rarely conforms to disciplinary expectations or limits, and any thinking about them that wants to meet with this has to be prepared to place itself at risk and be led beyond the artificial comforts of disciplinary convention.

This is a vocation that Theodor Adorno, in his remarkable essay on the essay – a text that so powerfully exemplifies its own argument – saw as central to its very concept, which he glossed as ‘the speculative investigation of specific, culturally pre-determined objects’.¹ For Adorno, the promise that the essay holds is the possibility of coming ‘so close to the here and now of the object, up to the point where

that object... dissociates itself into those elements in which it has its life'.² Here, thought's engagement with its material through the essay is something that neither method nor pre-established theoretical frameworks can survive, for they can never fully foresee the encounter or be truly adequate to it, and so instead can only do violence to its open-endedness. Rather, in the specificity of the encounter, a constellation comes into shape that exerts pressure on *a priori* theoretical formulations, which it cannot be made to fit without collapsing and draining away its complexity. The essay thus attends to the unruliness of things when they escape subordination to an interpretative regime. In this way, Adorno writes again, the essay 'neither deduces itself rigidly from theory... nor is it a down-payment on future syntheses. Disaster threatens intellectual experience the more strenuously it ossifies into theory and acts as if it held the philosopher's stone in its hand'.³

However limited the collection that follows may prove to be in relation to Adorno's reflections, the open, provisional, speculative and non-totalising character of the essay form that they describe remains for me something that is immensely appealing and important, not least because this way of thinking about the essay so closely corresponds to my own experience of writing the pieces that are assembled within this book. For time and again it seemed to me that, no matter how carefully and certainly I had arranged my materials, planned what to say, and structured my argument, all such preparations were thrown into disarray when writing began. Consequently, I have throughout remained strongly aware of writing as a dynamic and vital process, an ongoing interaction of thought with its materials that develops in ways that are frequently unexpected. It is not as if what was prepared or conceptualised beforehand is simply set aside, but rather that it becomes reorientated and reconfigured, gaining momentum in unforeseen directions under the demands that emerge from the ongoing work, demands that are never totally anticipated or clearly discerned in advance. Given this, it may then seem contradictory to assemble the essays within a single volume. In doing so, my aim has not been to elide the tensions and differences that exist between the writings in order to present them as a unified and coherent whole. On the contrary, I have sought, through the specific arrangement of the chapters, to intensify their essayistic character and bring to the surface the mobilities of thought and perspective that emerge out of the way each piece engages with the phenomena it addresses.

As noted, all the essays collected here – with the exception of perhaps one – are in some way concerned with issues related to the politics of representation. Through the various materials studied, they consider ways in which our relations with things and with one another are mediated through representational forms and the conditions under which such mediation works. This in turn inevitably entails questions of what specific kinds of media do, what ideological effects they produce, and what sorts of investment we come to have in them. Often the essays open up these issues through something that is noticed in the first instance, some kind of artefact or event that, however singular or minor it might at first sight appear, turns out to be eloquent in its ability to problematise a larger set of relations beyond itself – whether it be an eighteenth-century engraving that depicts a magnified drop of tap water as an alien planet swarming with monstrous creatures; an artwork showing a car with the silhouette of a building mounted on its roof; the covering up of a tapestry in the UN before a televised news conference; or a large-scale satellite image that is affixed to the basement floor of a public building, vertiginously dissolving its solidity. The essays were developed alongside other work – critical writing, architectural design teaching, and art and architectural practice – that I was doing throughout the period of their writing, and this is reflected in the material they examine and issues they explore, especially so in their recurring preoccupations with modes of elevated vision, spectacle, atmospheric politics and the limits of aesthetic experience.

In the opening chapter of the book, ‘The King in the City’, I analyse the politically freighted spectacle of George IV’s visit to Edinburgh in 1822, as it was stage-managed by the celebrated novelist Sir Walter Scott. This essay begins the sequence of four historically orientated chapters that together form the first section of the book. By examining the routes charted by Scott for the king’s entry after his arrival at the Port of Leith, the chapter shows how Edinburgh was transformed into a sequence of *tableaux vivants*, calculated to construct an emblematic narrative of Hanoverian supremacy that was then unfolded before the eye of the king as he moved through the city. In Scott’s directions to the citizenry, published anonymously prior to the visit, the specular interplay between, on one hand, the king’s vision and, on the other, the vision of the king as he appeared to the populace, was constantly and insistently emphasised, an oscillating relation between viewer and viewed clearly intended to produce politically integrative effects. The

chapter explores how these effects were conceptualised by contemporaries by focusing on the fascinating series of letters written by the advocate James Simpson to Scott in the wake of the event. In Simpson's anti-Jacobin exegesis the consequence of the royal visit is interpreted in terms of the visual model expounded in Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), in which the splendour of the spectacle of the king – whose eye renews what it alights upon – sets in play a dynamic of sympathy, the result of which is to stimulate, through a purportedly 'natural' process of identification, a deep *rapprochement* between the king and his subjects.

The following chapter takes us to the end of the nineteenth century and to the massive observation wheel that the engineer George Ferris constructed for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Although built as an explicit rival to Eiffel's tower in Paris, it was a unique achievement, a multivalent and complex phenomenon that was simultaneously a vantage point, a kinaesthetic device, and a visual entertainment installed within mass society. This chapter, which uses contemporary reports to examine the visual possibilities that the wheel offered and the optical effects it produced, proceeds by situating it within two key contexts – that of the aerial view and its ideological role within modernity, and that of the array of popular optical entertainments and toys that developed during the course of the nineteenth century. Comparing descriptions by the wheel's first passengers with early accounts of, in particular, the diorama, I argue that such 'hyper-visual spectacles', as they have been called, prefigured and shaped the visual experience of the wheel in important ways. Ferris was to remark that the idea for his construction had first come to him while he was dining at a Chicago chop-house, and the chapter concludes by reflecting on this origin myth, speculating on the possible relationships between the Ferris Wheel, proto-cinematic forms of photography – such as that of Eadweard Muybridge, in which movement was depicted through sequences of still images – and the 'production line' procedures for animal disassembly that were pioneered in Chicago's Union Stockyards during the years leading up to the exposition.

In the aftermath of World War II, Josef Stalin bestowed a gargantuan gift on the shattered city of Warsaw, the vast Soviet-sponsored skyscraper known as the Palace of Culture and Science (PKiN). Chapter 3 considers this difficult inheritance, which – although it endures as the contemporary city's most obvious landmark – remains,

at the same time, its most debated and troubling building. Here I focus specifically on the building's shadow, both literal and metaphoric, considering recent artworks and architectural projects that picture its exorcism, which is to say the detachment or dissolution of the historical memory that is the inevitable double of the material fabric of the building. Through this case study, and in relation to a range of material that includes the art of Komar and Melamid and recent literature on memory and oblivion, the chapter develops larger points about the complications of post-socialist attempts to forget, and concludes by interpreting a recent proposal – put forward by a group that includes the celebrated film director Andrzej Wajda – to found a museum of communism in the labyrinthine cellars of the Palace. Where Komar and Melamid's painting *The Origin of Socialist Realism* (1982–83) slyly reworked the famous origin-of-painting myth recounted in Pliny's *Natural History* in order to depict the inscription of the shadow of Stalin as the founding gesture of socialist realism, the museum-of-communism proposal comes to replay this scene, but in reverse. For now, instead of the absorption of Stalin's shadow into the building, it is the shadow of the Palace that is detached and rematerialised in anthropomorphic form as a colossal fallen and beheaded statue, the memory of a planned but never-realised monument to the leader that the promoters of the museum perversely find themselves obliged to construct in order to enact its symbolic execution.

Chapter 4 reflects upon the film *Powers of Ten* (1977), made by the Los Angeles design office founded by Charles and Ray Eames. Famous as an educational film that illustrates the dimensional relationship between things, it begins with a close-up of a sleeping man, from whom the camera then pulls away in an accelerating zoom, travelling into deep space before returning to plunge into his hand through a sequence of collapsing scales that eventually passes into the subatomic. Relating *Powers of Ten* to the preoccupation with verticality associated with the New Vision of the 1920s and 1930s, I propose a new reading of the film by placing it in its Cold War context and commissioning culture. The film is a late example of a long-running series of commissions from IBM that had seen the Eames shift from being designers of objects to designers of informational media. Against this background, the symbolic structure of *Powers of Ten*, which was first articulated in a trial film made in 1968, seems expressive of the reorientation of the Cold War space race from outer to the 'inner space' of the microscopic.

If IBM's electronic and computational machines were predicated upon an ability to intervene within and command this 'inner space', the latter was at the same time the focus of new anxieties regarding technological developments (such as miniaturisation) and political subjectivity. Examining this, the chapter considers the relation between *Powers of Ten* and the 1966 Hollywood science-fiction film *The Fantastic Voyage*, in which a US submarine-cum-spacecraft is shrunk and injected into the body of a Soviet scientist who has been injured in the process of defecting to the West. In conclusion the chapter reflects, via the work of the film studies scholar Michel Chion, upon the kind of epistemics of disappearance in which the film seems to participate, whereby the possibility of seeing more is linked to a condition in which the body diminishes to become purely a mobile eye in order to produce – in Chion's phrase – the 'mastery of space by vision'.

Following this, we shift our attention to visual phenomena of the more recent past, mobilising, but also revising, Guy Debord's theory of the spectacle in order to produce a new analysis of the visual logic of the London Eye, the gargantuan observation wheel that was erected alongside the Thames in the lead-up to Britain's millennium celebrations. In Debord's celebrated account, the spectacle is put forward as a radically immersive phenomenon, a politico-visual ideology that obscures reality in a totalising way. Here, however, I suggest that the ideological efficacy of the spectacle derives rather from the fact that its limits are all too apparent and that it therefore requires an active will to believe, an act of complicity whose features bear a similarity to those of cinematic spectatorship as theorised by Jean-Louis Comolli. Referring to the work of Giorgio Agamben, among others, the chapter goes on to examine the relation between the London Eye and its troubled twin, the Millennium Dome. If the Dome tended to founder under the representational dilemmas of how to stage a great exhibition in a post-imperial context, the London Eye side-stepped this by taking the city itself as its object. It did this, however, in a very particular way, fully exploiting the purifying effects of the aerial view. It was as if – post-9/11 – the strategy of the wheel's commercial sponsor, British Airways, was to use it to seek to uphold something of the romance of flight and its deeply rooted promise of transcendence, a sense driven home by the myriad advertising images of solitary figures within the wheel's capsules. Developing through close attention to the various visual discourses promoted around the London Eye, the chapter

concludes with a reflection on the kind of performative vision it solicits, one emblematised in the crystalline view of a city – visually purified because arrested – that William Wordsworth celebrated in *Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, Sept. 3, 1802*, a poem whose words were reproduced at large scale at the base of the wheel, past which, on its opening, visitors filed as they queued to enter its capsules.

Chapter 6 goes on to examine the affective and epistemic relations between the aerial view and the miniature, beginning with a consideration of a recent building, erected close to the London Eye. City Hall, by the architects Foster + Partners, is in many ways a reiteration of their famous remodelling of the Reichstag in Berlin. Certainly, the emphasis on visual transparency remains, but the London building is markedly less serene than its German counterpart. If the Reichstag project, looking back to the *Glasarchitektur* of the early twentieth century, seemed to locate the democratic process under the twin signs of transparency and light, City Hall, with its strangely overbalancing ramps and eccentric profile, seems rather to situate it under the signs of transparency and vertigo. What then connects these, and how might we think about their relationship to one another? One response might be that vertigo is disenchanting transparency: in other words, it is what happens once we dispense with the naive idea that transparency allows us to directly see things-in-themselves, and recognise that, to the contrary, as a ideal it demands a logically unending relay in which transparency must open onto transparency in an infinite series, thus dissolving any possibility of a stable grounding condition. This question is pursued with reference to Nabokov's novella *Transparent Things*; to Kant's analysis of the sublime, (vertigo being that which is induced when the transcendentalising and serenely elevating effects of 'ideas of reason' fail or become untenable); and to Hitchcock's film *Vertigo* (1958), which in many ways is itself an essay on the loss of ground, both physical and ontological. At the close of the chapter we return to City Hall, linking the question of the loss of ground to that of the collapse of distance by reflecting upon the curious experience of walking on the large-scale aerial photomap of London that is affixed to its basement floor.

When Frank Gehry's design for the Louis Vuitton Foundation for Creation in Paris – located in the Bois de Boulogne and due to be completed in 2014 – was first made public, the architect described it as 'a cloud of glass – magical, ephemeral, all transparent', thereby

rhetorically differentiating it from everything weighty, lumpen and earthbound. Not only do clouds seem the phenomena most liberated from all material loading, but equally – as things that signify both nothing and potentially everything – they appear to refuse the restraints of signification itself. Over the past 25 years there has been a gradual accumulation of architectural cloud projects, of which Gehry's is a late example, and in Chapter 7 I consider these. The essay suggests that the cloud motif has played a double role, allowing architects to maintain a foothold in two very different locations at the same time: on one hand clouds appear as deontologised, anti-metaphysical matter, formless and obscurant diffusions of the anorganic, while on the other they can act, paradoxically, as vehicles through which a claim to the transcendental can be maintained, and consequently an aroma of freedom and purity – even an ideological weightlessness – issues from them. These tensions are dramatised in Diller + Scofidio's Blur project (2002), which the chapter discusses at length, examining the relation between the architects' discursive emphasis on the cloud – which they described as the 'building of nothing' – as a formless, anti-spectacular phenomenon and the technical (and hyper-hylomorphic) preconditions for its achievement. The text analyses the gradual drift in descriptions of the project, as early statements that posed the cloud medium as a zone of cancelled vision and threatening electronic surveillance became increasingly superseded by a euphoric tone. The philosopher Hubert Damisch, for example, characterised Blur as presenting a 'pneumatological beauty', somewhere that was 'good to breathe', suggesting that it occupied an anomalous position in the history of exhibitionary structures insofar as it showed nothing and presented nothing for sale. However, the essay wonders if this most intriguing of recent architectural projects, in the merging of architecture and atmosphere that it manifested, did not in fact pioneer a new kind of environmental commodification.

This is a question I pursue further in Chapter 8, which examines the Sunny Mountain Ski-Dome that was proposed for Dubai, a project that eventually fell victim to the post-2007 global financial crisis. This glass-domed ski-resort in the desert, which was marketed as the interiorisation of a climatic zone that promised 'arctic experiences', presents us with an image of air-conditioning in its most spectacularised and developed commodity form, the latest manifestation of a long history of weather control projects within which military futurism and

technoscientific utopian speculation are intertwined. Weather control thus appears, for example, in one of the earliest works of science-fiction, Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, in which the airborne island of Laputa dominates its subject kingdom by the threat of hovering above it, so depriving the region of light and rain and reducing it to drought and famine. In the tradition of utopian thinking, however, weather control tends to take on a markedly remedial and emancipatory character: it almost as if weather *is* alienation, or at least a potent manifestation of it, and that to come together again, to break the ice with one another or with the world, will crucially involve getting the climate right. Against this background, the allegorical value of the Dubai ski-dome comes into focus inasmuch as the project gives us a depiction of the icing-over of the ideals of such utopian climatology and the kind of erotics it envisions. The Dubai project shows us how the transformation of the technoscientific utopian imaginary, in the present era of atmospheric anxiety and privatised air, involves a shift from collective spaces of climatic dedifferentiation to an urbanism of heightened and exclusive atmospheric relations that increasingly take on the character of a commodity-form in their own right.

In Chapter 9 I return to the aerial view in order to consider the rise of Google Earth, analysing it in the context of the company's holistic ideology and its stated mission to 'organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful'. The essay reflects on the agency of image-capture devices and of the programme's interface in the construction of a world picture that, while underpinned by a recognisable cultural image, at the same time presents us with something radically new. It is a picture that seems to offer us a different kind of political map, one that is no longer primarily structured by boundary lines and coloured territories, but rather by a politics of image resolution, which in turn is linked to – among other factors – national legislation governing the release of data in the specific countries where satellite imaging companies are registered and from which they operate. It is argued that the unprecedented mass availability of satellite imagery has led to a newly intensive mediation of the terrestrial surface by aerial images, according to the logic of commercial branding. Today hybrid 'mashups' of text, diagram and photographic imagery – phenomena previously entirely virtual – are realised as physical constructions on a terrestrial surface that has itself become a media screen, this testifying to the mass migration of the eyes of consumers into space. Under these

conditions the elevated eye can no longer be thought of in terms of coolness, objectivity and detachment, but has to be reconceptualised as something that, by its very presence, produces concrete material effects.

The following chapter extends the investigation of the agency and effects of remotely captured imagery, but now through the optic of the question of trust and images in the era of digitisation. The case study that I consider is Colin Powell's use of aerial satellite imagery in his presentation of evidence to the UN Security Council in February 2003, prior to the invasion of Iraq. The chapter pays close attention to the staging of the event, examining the way that a conflict of images was played out, which echoed the confrontation between the US administration and the weapons inspectors led by Hans Blix. In this confrontation, the 'coolness' and apparent objectivity of the aerial images was posed against the agonistic on-the-ground depiction of bombing contained in the tapestry reproduction of Picasso's *Guernica* that hangs outside the UN Security Council chamber but, prior to Powell's presentation, was covered over with a cloth. Notably, the reconnaissance images that Powell showed, although presented as evidence, were markedly not – to use a term from the semiotics of C.S. Peirce – indexical. Indeed, the images had been drawn over by the US intelligence specialists, to the extent that a diagrammatic graphic layer now obscured the photographic image below. Ostensibly this was done to 'make clear' what the image pictured, but it indicates the increasing tendency, which is part of the computational revolution, for evidence to be always already delivered up as interpretation (DNA analysis, etc). The matching of a photograph with a face is today less to do with 'likeness', in the traditional iconic sense, than with the fineness of the information that can be extracted from the image and correlated between electronic files. In the digital age, indexicality is inevitably a 'transcoded indexicality'. It is no longer a case of the direct transmission of light-rays between the subject of the photograph and the sensitised surface on which its image will be fixed. Instead the image is immediately translated into code, from which it must be reconstructed if it is to become visually legible once more. As code, however, it is from the beginning a kind of analysis, one that facilitates processes of filing, comparison, etc. Digital technologies of identification, such as the iris scan, are then less, as Giorgio Agamben has suggested, 'bio-political tattooing' – which is the stamping of an

externally determined code onto the body – than the encoding of the body itself in its very formation.

In Chapter 11 I return to ground and also to London to consider the installation *Marsyas*, produced by the artist Anish Kapoor in 2002 for the vast Turbine Hall exhibition space at the Tate Modern gallery. The name of the artwork refers to the satyr who, having found the pipes that had been invented by the goddess Athena – but which were cast aside by her in disgust after she saw how playing them deformed her face – challenged the god Apollo to a musical contest. The chapter examines the relation between visual and acoustic monstrosity as it is articulated in the myth, drawing upon Jean-Pierre Vernant's writing on the gorgon to show how Marsyas's playing of the instrument is positioned within a mimetics of monstrosity that leads back to Medusa. If the gorgon is an emblem of visual experience intensified to the point of its own cancellation, then this is re-enacted through the horrific punishment of flaying that Apollo visits upon the vanquished body of the satyr, a punishment that – as the chapter shows – has stood as a kind of limit condition of what sight can bear. Citing Zbigniew Herbert's poem, *Apollo and Marsyas* (1961), in which the petrifying visual effect of the gorgon becomes transferred onto Marsyas's howl, I develop a new reading of Kapoor's installation that interprets it, in its overwhelming visual phonicity, as a silent sound work.

In the various debates about inter-, trans-, cross- and multi-disciplinarity that have taken place within the humanities in recent years, the questions of what a-disciplinarity would be and how it might be conceptualised have not been opened. Yet it is an obvious possibility, one that seems logically closer to the implications of post-structuralism than the more familiar terms that are often assumed to have been – at least in part – derived from it. The closing chapter of the book explores the question of architecture and a-disciplinarity by revisiting the art theorist and historian Rosalind Krauss's celebrated use of A.J. Greimas's semiotic square in her seminal essay 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field'. This is read in relation to a text that is perhaps lesser known, Fredric Jameson's 'Of Islands and Trenches', a commentary on Louis Marin's book *Utopics: Spatial Play* published a year prior to the Krauss article. The prefix 'a-' places us in the zone of what semiologists describe as the neutral (neither/nor), and this – in its role as the anticipator of a futurity that points beyond the closure of the present – is the focus of Marin's and Jameson's interest, and

indeed is that which Marin claims to be the properly utopic. And this returns us, in conclusion, to the discursive role played by the cloud in recent architectural thinking, insofar as it takes shape, or rather remains shapeless, through a process of constant refusal of any identifying gestures.

With the exception of Chapters 4 and 12, the texts that appear in this book are reproduced in the form in which they were originally published, with minor amendments that include changes to illustrative material. Readers will notice that some contextualising details in a number of the essays, while correct at the time of writing, are now out of date. Rather than changing these, it has seemed preferable to me to maintain the texts, as far as possible, in the form in which they were produced, but to add a date in brackets at the end of each chapter for clarity. This reflects the year in which the text was written – or written and revised, when two dates appear – and not the year of first publication.