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Art & Fear: An Introduction

John Armitage

Paul Virilio is now recognised for his theorising of aesthetics and politics throughout the English-speaking world. The translation and publication of Art & Fear adds considerably to his discussions of contemporary art and the politics of human silence. These are both subjects that Virilio is increasingly anxious about. In diverse respects Virilio feels alienated from the 'pitiless' way in which twenty-first century artists, unlike twentieth century modern artists, seem incapable either of understanding the full horror of human violence or remaining silent. Greatly interested in every kind of creative departure, in these two essays on 'Pitiless Art' and 'Silence on Trial' Virilio broadens his earlier deliberations on the 'aesthetics of disappearance'.¹ In particular, he is interested in re-evaluating twentieth century theories of modern art and duration, the spoken word and the right to stay silent in an era that is increasingly shaped by the shrill sonority of contemporary art.

Even so, Virilio's questioning of twentieth century theories of modern art, the removal of silence and the contemporary art that has issued from such premises and practices cannot be understood as a poststructuralist rejection of humanism or the real human body. Rather, it must be interpreted as the search for a humanism that can face up to the contempt shown toward the body in the time of what Virilio labels the 'sonorisation' (the artistic production of resonant and noisy soundscapes) of all visual and virtual representations. Virilio elucidated this recently concerning Orlan and Stelarc, both world-renowned

multimedia body artists. Speaking in an interview entitled 'Hyperviolence and Hypersexuality' Virilio castigates these leading members of the contemporary 'multimedia academy' while discussing his increasing consternation before their pitiless academic art that also involves the condemnation of a silence that has become a kind of 'mutism'.² As he put it, anti-human body art 'contributes to the way in which the real body, and its real presence, are menaced by various kinds of virtual presence'.³

As an elder French theorist born in Paris in 1932, Virilio is indebted to his experience of the Second World War. Resembling the Viennese Actionists of the 1960s he cannot detach his thought from the event of Auschwitz. Virilio is then continually responsive to the most frightening and extremely horrific features of our epoch. It was, though, the Second World War, and, in particular, the tragedy of the Nazi concentration and extermination camps that educated Virilio about the depths of human violence. Or, more precisely, the catastrophe of the Nazi death camps encouraged him to respect the human body and its capacity for silence. In different ways, then, Virilio is forging and transforming our understanding of the ethical dilemmas associated with silence and the subsequent aesthetic conflicts linked to the sonorisation of the audio-visual within the sphere of contemporary art.

Through offering his Christian assistance to the homeless of post Second World War Paris, whilst simultaneously producing theoretical critiques of the dehumanising characteristics of total war, Virilio gradually discovered his humanism. Crucial to this discovery is an assessment of the aesthetics and ethics of human perception, an assessment that Virilio began to piece together. Yet

no simple appeasement with the nineteenth century situation of industrialized modernisation was possible. This is because, for Virilio, it was through the carnage of the First and Second World Wars that modern art, from German Expressionism and Dada to Italian Futurism, French Surrealism and American Abstract Expressionism, had developed first a reaction to alienation and second a taste for anti-human cruelty.

‘To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric’ wrote Theodor Adorno, a statement that Virilio believes even Adorno would now have to acknowledge as an underestimation, given the increasing pace of artistic desperation, the catastrophes of modernity and the crisis in modern art.⁴ Spellbound by human violence, Virilio considers that contemporary artists have abandoned their function of continually reassessing the creative practices and sensibilities, imagination and cultural meaning of the advanced societies. In contrast to Nietzsche, Sartre or Camus, Virilio claims that he is anxious to study the varieties of life and the contemporary art of the crisis of meaning that nineteenth and twentieth century artists have shaped and the genocide that homicidal rulers have in reality committed. Connecting a multiplicity of artistic, philosophical and political resources, Virilio is crucially engrossed in examining the revolution that contemporary art is presently undertaking through its espousal of terroristic aesthetic procedures and the premeditated termination of the enunciation of silence.

The assaults on signs and silence that Virilio observes in contemporary art were already deadly in intent by the 1950s. For him it is not a matter of witnessing a real murder but more exactly the murder of signs of artistic pity in

the name of freedom of artistic representation. Contemplating the unwritten and nightmarish hallucinations of nineteenth and twentieth century art and terror, Virilio is apprehensive not to overlook that this was a historical epoch that simultaneously administered the implosion of the avant-garde and the monochromatic and the explosion of nuclear weapons in glorious Technicolor.

Virilio thinks for example that the nihilistic sensibilities of nineteenth century Russian intellectuals cannot be divorced from the grave disarray to be found today in the advanced democracies. Furthermore, twentieth century art, through its expectation of the contemporary politics of hate, has added to the downfall of pitiful art and to the rise of a pitiless art that privileges hot colours over cold and the sonorisation of all earlier silent imagery. Virilio is also critical of the contemporary world of revulsion represented in New German Painting and managed by an art market captivated by annihilation. Determining the sensitivities of today's artists in the manner of German Expressionism, contemporary art disdains the silent pity of nineteenth and twentieth century images of the bloodshed of battle. In its place, as we shall see in the next section, according to Virilio, pitiless art embraces seductive TV images of carnage.

Pitiless Art

In explaining the aesthetics of disappearance in modern representative art, Virilio characterised its theories as abstract, being concerned to acknowledge that it is vanishing.⁵ Today, describing 'pitiless art', he illustrates its premises as 'presentative', a recognition that representative art is finished. But where do Virilio's rather extraordinary accounts develop? What do such assertions denote? In effect, he is voicing a doubt previously felt by him in The Art of the Motor and The Information Bomb that, under the influence of new information and communications technologies, democratic institutions are disappearing as the key locations where political representation operates.⁶ Virilio writes of the emergence of public opinion and the appearance of a 'virtual' or 'multimedia democracy' that is not just obliterating democracy but, due to the growth of hyperviolence and an excessively and peculiarly sexless pornography, also the senses of the human body. Instead of producing a merciless art of presentation, Virilio argues, with its live TV images of genuine torment and aggression, its wretchedness, self-destruction, disfigurement, extinction and abhorrence, contemporary artists should reclaim the evacuated space of the art of representation, the space of symbolic yet crucially sympathetic images of violence.

In considering the art of representation, Virilio is seeking a debate over the status of negationism in art. The associations between contemporary aesthetics and modern ethics also permit him to introduce the problem of compassion. For Virilio, this entrusts the aesthetics of fear with the task of detecting a type of immediacy and a system of representation totally dissimilar

from presentational art. This indicates that contemporary artists ought not to maintain their concentration on a chaotic and heartless form of perception. The artistic suppression of sympathy, prejudiced by the attack of medical science on the body and its subsequent presentation, presupposes that the dead are of concern only when either violating some existing prohibition or offering themselves up as images of torture. Indifferent to the sensitive attitude to the body, presentational art opens up aesthetic forms that for Virilio are dissimilar to those of the Viennese Actionists, even if something of the Actionists self-sacrificial and violent artistic practices endure. Taking the poetic truth of brutal reality out of the loop, today's lethal presentational art of scientific voyeurism is powerless to express the actual extent of human cruelty.

Yet, as Virilio proposes, the aesthetics of disappearance also offers a mask to those artists who refuse to recognise its transgressions. He justifies this vital conception by way of his contention that the depravity of contemporary art commenced in advertising before transferring to the everyday craving for murder that also brings into being the totalitarianism of unquestioning belief. As a result, contemporary art does not check mass mediated nihilism but rather assumes that the representational techniques of the aesthetics of disappearance will persist in further debasing our entire 'hypermodern' or 'excessive' idea of humanity.⁷ For his part, Virilio refuses to tolerate an aesthetics that implies the disappearance of every type of art except presentational art. In insisting on its deceptive closeness, Virilio is objecting to a presentational art that seeks out the total destruction of careful viewer contemplation. Challenging the theories of the Canadian media mystic Marshall McLuhan, and particularly McLuhan's

concept of an 'absolute present', Virilio advances the idea that it is impossible to eradicate the comparative and the momentary in questions concerning the analogical experience of events. In other words, Virilio has no plans to become a theorist who surrenders to the lure of a life lived in the immediacy of mass mediated despair.

Hence, when Virilio considers the aesthetics of disappearance, he assumes that the responsibility of artists is to recover rather than discard the material that is absent and to bring to light those secret codes that hide from view inside the silent circuits of digital and genetic technologies. It is through the idea of the demise of a kind of transitory imaginary that Virilio expounds his perception of the nihilism of current technology. He judges for example that since genetics has now become culture, artists also have started to converse in the idiom of 'counter nature' but for the benefit of the performative goals of eugenics. In so doing, Virilio argues that artists critically fail to appreciate what ethical concerns are at risk in the genetic factories of fear. Virilio meets such ethical dilemmas head-on when he describes his aesthetics of disappearance as a conception that can be characterised as 'pure nature'. This is owing to the fact that, in his view, and especially following the transformations literally taking shape in genetics, culture and science are now free of almost-all human scruples. Given that aesthetics and ethics are ailing, Virilio advises that artists show mercy on both while combating the globalisation of the technoscientific propaganda of cloning, the new science of human disappearance.

For him, no ethical forces or even the aesthetics of disappearance can rationalise a technoscience that has become theatre after the time of total war or in the present period where the will to extermination reigns supreme. Such occurrences, contends Virilio, necessitate the denunciation of the pitilessness of a contemporary art that combines with eugenics and cloning whilst inconsiderately and self-consciously connecting to the repulsion of the Nazis' experimentation first on animals and then on humans. The significance of these episodes is established through the fact that they serve to corroborate that Nazi criteria are at the present time the foundation on which scientists and artists seek to establish a new humanity. As Virilio maintains, the scientific formation of humans is today a certainty whose meanings are technologically determined, calling to mind not the natural labour of procreation but the artificial work of scientific creation in which the development of eugenics without frontiers is well underway. Intensely attentive to post-human developments, Virilio has nonetheless realised that any cultural politics that seeks out restrictions to a freedom of aesthetic representation devoid of frontiers confronts a difficult task. As he explains it in 'Pitiless Art', after violating the 'taboos of suffocating bourgeois culture, we are now supposed to break the being, the unicity of humankind'. In Virilio's terms, then, and owing to the 'impending explosion of a genetic bomb' of scientific excess, the 'counter culture' of nature 'will be to biology what the atomic bomb was to physics'.

Virilio is also anxious to determine how extreme artists and scientists are willing to think and act before making an objection, for example, to 'snuff' literature. This is because for him the impulse to torture imagines a readiness to

ruin the evaluation of the art lover, to 'derealise' contemporary art, theatre and dance. Virilio thinks that today's artists are no longer able to ascertain the genuine character of flawed and shattered bodies or the degree of self-hatred at work in their creations. In his view, snuff literature is the gateway to snuff videos and snuff dance given that pity is excluded from the outset. Virilio is, however, unconcerned with instituting an alternative declaration to that of Adorno's concerning the writing of poetry that will stand up to the barbarism moving within the advanced societies after Auschwitz. To be more precise, he is apprehensive to say the least about a freedom of expression that features a call to murder. Consequently, Virilio questions a political correctness that presupposes a terroristic, suicidal and self-mutilating theory of art. Making links between contemporary art and genetically modified seeds bearing the label 'terminator', he is trying to find an image of pitiful art that exists outside of the conditions of bio or 'necro-technology'. Refusing technoscientific 'success' at any price, Virilio insists on a cultural critique of scientific experiment, technological inhumanity and deformity.

Such moral and artistic refusals Virilio understands as a thought-provoking inquiry into a freedom of scientific expression that is at present as limitless as freedom of artistic expression. He declares his unqualified opposition to the appearance of a 'transgenic art' that is neither tolerable within its own self-designation or as the starting point for a contemplative relationship between the species. Exploring the hypermodern 'cult of performance' in a genuine human race directed by the global magnates of sport, finance and the media, Virilio is adamant on the subject of his

questioning of a biologically contrived 'super-humanity' lacking adequate ethical procedures or limitations. To be sure, he wants to turn his back on the fashionable scientific and artistic idea of the human body as a technologically assisted survival unit that has outlasted its usefulness. Rejecting what Arendt identified as the 'banality of evil' at work in Nazism and more lately in Pol Pot's Cambodia and elsewhere, Virilio concludes 'Pitiless Art' with a plea to condemn the transgressions of contemporary art.⁸ In 'Silence on Trial', though, he challenges whether all that stays silent is judged to consent, to allow without a murmur of complaint the contemporary conditions of audio-visual overload.

Silence on Trial

In this essay Virilio is for the most part involved with exposing a silence that has lost its ability to 'speak', with a mutism that takes the form of a censorship of silence in an age awash with the obscenity of noise. Unrestricted 'Son et Lumiere' events and 'live' art exhibitions, for instance, currently flood many social and cultural spaces. Virilio recognises such occasions as illustrations of the disappearance of representation and the motorised regime of speed in contemporary art that confirms the substitution of the aesthetics of appearance by the aesthetics of disappearance. Assuming a historical perspective, he points to the previously neglected significance of the appearance and imposition of talking pictures or 'talkies' in the 1920s. In fact, in Virilio's opinion, it was in this period that citizens who indicated silence as a mode of articulation were first judged to assent to the diminishing power of silent observation and the

increasing supremacy of the audio-visual. In our day, however, the question according to Virilio is whether the work of art is to be considered an object that must be looked at or listened to? Or, alternatively, given the reduction of the position of the art lover to that of a component in the multimedia academy's cybernetic machine, can the aesthetic and ethical silence of art continue to be upheld?

Video and conceptual art have been increasingly important concepts of Virilio's work on the audio-visual torrent of the mass media and the digital contamination of the image ever since The Art of the Motor. Nevertheless, it appears in 'Silence on Trial' that Virilio's interpretation of the new information and communications technologies of 'hyper-abstraction' such as the Internet is shaping new forms of theoretical exploration that are necessitating an alternative approach to his previous writings on the speed of light. For in this essay Virilio also contemplates the speed of sound. As he describes it, the contemporary technique of painting with sound, lacking figures or images first emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the works of Wagner and Kandinsky, Schwitters, Mondrian and Moholy-Nagy. But, for Virilio, present day sound art obliterates the character of visual art while concurrently advancing the communication practices of the global advertising industry that have assaulted the art world to such a degree that it is at present the central dogma of the multimedia academy. People today for example have to endure the pressure of the 'ambient murmuring' of incessant muzak at the art gallery, at work or at the shopping mall. Furthermore, their silence on such matters is, in Virilio's terms, connected with the closing phase of the aesthetics

of disappearance that is also the gateway to a new 'aesthetics of absence', an absence where the silence of the visible is abolished by the sound of audio-visual multimedia.

However, as Virilio makes clear, in struggling against the aesthetics of absence in the name of the silence of the visible, it is important not to overemphasise the significance of the visual cinematic image in particular as a method of examining the power of sound. From his perspective, this is due to the fact that cinematic images saturate human consciousness and are more damaging than often recognised. Virilio places his hopes in the 'accident of the visible' and the annihilation of the audio-visual by a politics of silence. Dating the contemporary crisis in the plastic arts from the invention of the talkies, he insists that this is the basis of the resulting condemnation of human deafness and the marketing of sound that has given rise to the 'trauma of the ear'. Equally significantly, Virilio is especially sceptical of the insertion of speech into the image owing to the fact that the art lover rapidly becomes a casualty of the speed of sound and a prisoner of the noise of the visible. It is also important to keep in mind that for him the arts are presently transfixed by a will to noise, a phenomenon whose objective is the purging of silence. For these reasons, as Virilio understands it, the turmoil in contemporary visual art is not the consequence of the development of photography or the cinema but the outcome of the creation of the talkies. Such a declaration in addition relates to his questioning of the waning of oral traditions that unsurprisingly for Virilio entails the ever 'telepresent' talking image and the ever more fainter presence of silent reality. To say nothing, declares Virilio, is not simply an act that leads

to fear, to pitiless art and to pitiless times, but also to the domination of the immediacy of contemporary visual art by the sonority of the audio-visual.

Implicated in Virilio's final thoughts about contemporary art losing ground to sonority on account of its immediacy is his on-going resistance to the end of spontaneous reactions to works of art and the continuing imposition of the conditioned reflex action. Virilio's purpose at this juncture is to disrupt those graphic arts that unreservedly rely on the speed of sound. This strategy is typical of Virilio's 'pitiful' artistic stance and of his preceding radical cultural analyses. In The Art of the Motor and in 'Silence on Trial', for instance, Virilio rejects the screaming and streaming multimedia performances of the body artist, Stelarc. As Virilio notes, it is of fundamental importance that the hyperviolence and hypersexuality that at present rule the screens of hypermodernity are challenged given that they are the supreme instigators of social insecurity and the crisis in figurative art. He understands the art of the mass media consequently as the most perilous effort yet to manage the silent majority through a spurious voice conveyed through public opinion polls, corporate sponsorship and advertising. Virilio thus laments the eradication of the modern 'man of art' by hypermodern contemporary artists such as Stelarc. Such a loss to him is also an injury to all those who still yearn to speak even when they stay silent. Virilio is accordingly looking to uncover within the field of contemporary art the forces involved in the systematic termination of the silence of the visual and the gesture of the artist. By explaining in 'Silence on Trial' that such forces plan to extend the motorization of art while removing

the sensations of the human subject, Virilio concludes that, for him at least, cybernetic art and politics have limits that do not include murder.

The Aesthetics of Auschwitz

Commentators on Virilio's Art & Fear might claim that his powerful speculations on contemporary media are the conjectures of a critic of the art of technology who has lost hope in the ability of modernism and hypermodernism to effectively face up to rising hyperviolence and hypersexuality. His works and interviews as a rule are, however, very much concerned with circumventing the dangers of an indiscriminate aesthetic pessimism. Yet it does appear in 'Pitiless Art' and 'Silence on Trial' as if he is at times perhaps excessively disparaging of the trends and theories associated with contemporary art and film, politics and the acceleration of the mass media. In condemning pitiless art and the recent ordeal experienced by those seeking a right to silence without implied assent, he is possibly rather too cautious with regard to the practices of contemporary art. As in the case of the body artist, Stelarc, Virilio's criticism of his work tends to overlook the remarkable and revolutionary questioning of the conventional principles of the functioning of the human body that Stelarc's medical operations and technological performances signify. For Virilio, however, the humiliation of the art lover through the imposition of pitiless images and ear-splitting sound systems in the art gallery and elsewhere is not so much the beginning of an aesthetic debate as the beginning of the end of humanity.

In the same way, the thinking behind Virilio's recent writings on the idea of a contemporary multimedia academy only adds to the feeling that he increasingly proposes a type of criticism that is antagonistic towards academia generally. One difficulty with this sort of strategy is that in order to oppose accepted theoretical dialogues on art and politics Virilio is obliged to ignore or to engage with them and in both instances thereby draw attention to the fact that his work cannot sustain itself without such discourses. Virilio's dilemma, of course, then develops into that of both being censured for his lack of familiarity with the contemporary aesthetic and political discussions that he disapproves of and for trying to place his work outside of such deliberations. In other words, Virilio is from time to time in danger of staging a debate with only himself in attendance. Forever on the lookout for innovative body artists and other multimedia projects that expose the hypermodern condition, Virilio is perhaps wont to unfairly accuse them of surrendering to a style of uncritical multimedia academicism. In so doing he can occasionally be read as if he is unaware that a body artist like Stelarc also criticises multimedia academicism as well as traditional conceptions of identity.

Stelarc's theoretical and applied technological revolutions in the field of contemporary art also function to transform questions concerning art's power of effect and inadvertently assist Virilio in conceiving of pitiless art and its deafening manifestation as crucial characteristics of the present hypermodern order. He is, in short, developing a stimulating mode of theorising in these essays that moves away from that typically found in contemporary art. What is absolutely vital for Virilio is the technological means by which contemporary

art has abandoned its passion and sexual force. Conversely, it is important to stress that he is undoubtedly concerned not to characterise contemporary art in opposition to theory or aesthetic fervour, but to distinguish it as a pitiless and emotionless reaction to the disastrous circumstances of hypermodernity. As a result of such heartfelt aesthetic declarations, Virilio is quick to single out the hypersexuality of contemporary pornography as the most recent source of pitiless representations and sadistic ideas.

Given that contemporary artists and specialists in pornography have twisted pitilessness and noise into the rallying call of a totally destructive and increasingly non-representational regime, it is hardly surprising that Virilio senses that he must dissociate his work from what might be called the 'aesthetics of Auschwitz'. Here, Virilio is in fact paying attention to the reproduction and globalisation of the aesthetics of Auschwitz in the present day. He thus not only refuses the collective delusion that Auschwitz was a singular historical event but also Adorno's assertion that to write poetry after it is barbaric. Virilio wants to recognise that in video and film, TV and on the Internet, Auschwitz inhabits us all as a fundamental if often repressed component of contemporary processes of cultural globalisation. Today, as a result, art, according to Virilio, confronts the predicament first identified by Walter Benjamin, that is, of imagining that barbarism and warfare will 'supply the artistic gratification of a sense perception that has been changed by technology'. In jeopardy of preoccupying itself with virtualised self-absorption, contemporary art, Virilio argues, as well as humanity, has attained a level of

'self-alienation' that it can now 'experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order'.⁹

As Virilio interprets it in Art & Fear, the outcome of contemporary aesthetic and political theories and practices is that the viewer of art has been converted into a casualty of a pitiless aesthetics bent on the sonorisation of everything. In 'Pitiless Art' and 'Silence on Trial', however, it is not so much Virilio's aesthetics of disappearance that takes centre stage but rather his reconsideration of twentieth century art and especially its associations with the ruling audio-visual regime of contemporary art. Rejection of the human body or its virtualisation, declares Virilio, are the only alternatives presented to the art lover by the multimedia academy led by body artists such as Orlan and Stelarc. For him, these and other artists and the multimedia events they perform disclose their anti-humanism and lack of respect for the body. Virilio condemns pitiless art and the destruction of silence as a consequence of his belief that the mutism intrinsic to contemporary body art shows the way to the terrorisation of the real body by the virtual body. Virilio's words of warning to contemporary artists are that to stop thinking about the Second World War and Auschwitz is to forget the reality of the horror of war and the violence of extermination. It is to ignore the responsibility to value the body and its alternating attachments to silence and noise.

In evoking this responsibility, Virilio explains that he employs his Christian humanist critique of war, alienation and cruelty in an artistic and political sense, perhaps as an aide memoire of a further precise obligation to poetry or as an awareness of the aesthetics of Auschwitz. Hypermodern art is

for Virilio a manifestation of a contemporary aesthetics that aspires to celebrate Nietzschean violence while discounting a crisis of meaning that is so profound that it is fast becoming indistinguishable from what he describes in 'Pitiless Art' as 'the call to murder and torture'. Remember, asks Virilio, the 'media of hate in the ex-Yugoslavia of Slobodan Milosovic' or the "Thousand Hills Radio" of the Great Lakes region of Africa calling Rwandans to inter-ethnic genocide?' Faced with such 'expressionist events', he answers, 'surely we can see what comes next, looming over us as it is: an officially terrorist art preaching suicide and self-mutilation – thereby extending the current infatuation with scarring and piercing'. Contemporary art is then the expression of all those artists who take for granted that today's transformation of the field of aesthetics into a kind of terroristic performance also implies the elimination of silence. As a constant critic of the art of technology and the current attack on representation, Virilio is intensely uneasy about the development of pitiless art. He challenges its claim to a freedom of expression that demands the implosion of aesthetics, the explosion of dread and the unleashing of a worldwide art of nihilism and a politics of hate. Virilio thus looks to reclaim a poignant or pitiful art and the politics of silence from an art world enchanted by its own extinction because to refuse pity is to accept the continuation of war. But more than this, in the pages that follow, he seeks to go beyond the gates of pitiless art and the prosecution of silence in order to explore the aesthetics of Auschwitz, the source of all our contemporary art and fears.

Notes

¹ I would like to thank Ryan Bishop and Verena Andermatt Conley for their valuable comments on an earlier draft of this Introduction. The essays published here, ‘Pitiless Art’ and ‘Silence on Trial’, were originally given as two talks by Paul Virilio in 1999 at the Maeght Foundation in Saint-Paul-de-Vence in the South of France. On Virilio’s concept of the aesthetics of disappearance see Paul Virilio, The Aesthetics of Disappearance, trans. Philip Beitchman, New York, Semiotext(e), 1991.

² ‘Hyperviolence and Hypersexuality: Paul Virilio Interviewed by Nicholas Zurbrugg’, trans. Nicholas Zurbrugg, Eyeline 45, Autumn/Winter, 2001: 10-13.

³ ‘Hyperviolence and Hypersexuality: Paul Virilio Interviewed by Nicholas Zurbrugg’, trans. Nicholas Zurbrugg, Eyeline 45, Autumn/Winter, 2001: 10.

⁴ Theodor Adorno, ‘Cultural Criticism and Society’, in his Prisms, trans. Samuel and Sherry Weber, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1967: 34.

⁵ Paul Virilio, The Aesthetics of Disappearance, trans. Philip Beitchman, New York, Semiotext(e), 1991.

⁶ Paul Virilio, The Art of the Motor, trans. Julie Rose, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1995; Paul Virilio, The Information Bomb, trans. Chris Turner, London, Verso, 2000.

⁷ On Virilio’s hypermodernism see John Armitage (ed) Paul Virilio: From Modernism to Hypermodernism and Beyond, London, Sage, 2000.

⁸ The term ‘banality of evil’ was first coined by Hannah Arendt in Chapter 15 of her Eichmann in Jerusalem, London, Penguin, 1963.

⁹ Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in his Illuminations, trans. Harry Zohn, New York, Schocken Books, 1969: 242.

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