Unlayering the Relational: Microaesthetics and Micropolitics

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Introduction.

With the weakening of neoliberal capitalism, the strengthening of a networked mode of being, and the increasing complexity of disparate forms of existence within culture, politics, economics, religion and ethics, it is no wonder we turn again to the relational in our artistic processes of retrieving and creating anew. As subjects in the aesthetics and politics of everyday life, we find these relational processes making themselves more insistently present as both art practices and ways of being together. To engage an artistic practice in the broader contexts described above—as "artist" or as "audience", but always in co-emergence—implies smooth passage through spatial and temporal layers from local to global. It also implies that any counter-workings of art and politics must exist as a form of maneuvering rather than as a fixed subjectivity.

It is our frame of reference, then, to examine contemporary critical art practices in line with changing responses to society and technology—a logical condensation of periods and art historical movements into the manner of simultaneous multiplicities and blurred categorical barriers that make industry, conceptual production and even everyday life part of a potential creative practice. In this sense, our focus upon interventions, interactive work and community-based art are less ideological brackets than *means*, or ways of doing, that parallel the transition from a manufacturing to a service-based economy, as suggested by Nicolas Bourriaud's (2002) examination of art in the 1990s. But to discuss Bourriaud's exploration of relational aesthetics goes beyond another manifesto for art, and in fact many of the artists he examined in correlation with his thesis were angered to be grouped and categorized together as such.

As artists, then, is it possible now to re-examine the spatiotemporal parameters characterizing Bourriaud's *esthétique relationnel?* Is it possible in our aesthetic and political practice to enter a new realm of the volumetric, whereby the flat spaces of media intertwine with embodied experience and today's increasing social complexity?

In order to make sense of the micro-scale realities of our approach to aesthetics and politics, we must first make reference to the issue as it has been set down before us. While Walter Benjamin (1969) first described the "aestheticization of politics" as a tool of power juxtaposing art and life toward a particular end in politics, Jacques Rancière (2006) goes further to elaborate an inherent paradox born of this relation:

> [T]he definition of a specific aesthetic sphere does not withdraw the artworks from politics. On the contrary their politicity is linked with that separateness. But, second, the autonomy of the aesthetic sphere is not the autonomy of the art works. It was in the representational regime of art that artworks were defined by the properties and rules of mimesis distinguishing them from other artefacts. When this regime collapses, artworks are merely defined by their belonging to a specific sphere. A specific kind of space qualifies thus objects which can no more be distinguished by the process of their production. But that sphere has no definite boundaries. The autonomy of art is its heteronomy as well. That duality makes for two politics of aesthetics. Art is political, in the aesthetical regime of art, inasmuch as its objects belong to a separate sphere. And it is political inasmuch as its objects have no specific difference with the objects of the other spheres.

Key to Rancière's discussion of the politics of aesthetics and the aesthetics of politics is the explicit delineation and configuration of space as political. For Bourriaud (2002), however, relational artworks suggest rather a zone in which "it is no longer possible to regard the contemporary work as a space to be walked through … [but] is henceforth presented as a period of time to be lived through, like an opening to unlimited discussion."

Taken together, we seem to have the spatiotemporal qualities of what Hakim Bey (2003) referred to as *temporary autonomous zones*, which Bourriaud (2002) himself describes as "microtopias." While we can agree that there is a time and space for any of the works he describes (namely, those of artists such as Rikrit Tiravanija and Pierre Huyghe)—the "temporary" and "zone" of Bey's *TAZ*—can we unequivocally say the same about the work's autonomy? As art enters the *polis*, can we speak of an independent politics that "does not mean life in some local party headquarters, but the generically human experience of beginning

something again, an intimate relationship with contingency and the unforeseen, being in the presence of others" (Virno, 2004, p. 51)? In short, can we engage through a relational aesthetic what we might refer to as a micropolitics, in which the relations of the collective or temporary community replaces ideology as an organizing principle?

Perhaps not. Critic Claire Bishop (2004) questions the emancipatory potential of Bourriaud's microtopias, asking about their explicitly "political" nature and the quality of the relations they enable. And she suggests that the relational aesthetics is at once independent of, and bound with what Giorgio Agamben (2000) refers to as the society of integrated spectacle.

Unlayering, Microaesthetics, Micropolitics.

In the age of what Giorgio Agamben (2000) refers to as the integrated spectacle, few of the static two-dimensional images that are presented to us in the course of everyday life—magazine ads, billboards, posters, direct mailings, and the like—are in fact truly depthless artefacts. Rather, they are the result of careful processes in which part-objects have been layered on top of one another, grouped together, and transformed in various ways before being flattened out to the final "static" image. Generally speaking, these part-objects may be either textual elements or other image elements, that is, the fundamental building blocks of Vilém Flusser's (2002) line and surface thinking.

If we are to extrapolate this analysis of the media image towards an 'unlayering' of a wholly different artistic practice, we come upon a much more complex dynamic between the product and its production process. To 'unlayer' the elements of a performative work, public intervention or a community-based project is much more than a documentation of its spatio-temporal parameters. While the question of documentation as artwork is a long-standing one, there is still a clear understanding of the borders between the event and its ensuing media objects. But for an event such as Global Village Basketball, one of our recent projects, the use of media is much more ambiguously intertwined with the actual time-space of the experience—a simple game of pickup basketball. The basic premise of GVB was a one day long event of multiple simultaneous games of pickup basketball around the world into one large meta-game through the internet.

The project's condensation of a 24-hour time-space (already rendered diffuse through the literal stretching across time zones) was coordinated via its crucial online campaign via web and word-of-mouth. In order to play, participants logged in the scores tallied from a real-world game of basketball, the identity of each game completely unique and subjectively experienced, then rendered into the numerical aggregate score of one of two, randomly chosen teams: Red or Blue. The point of irony is this pivot of competition. By rendering the collectivity of the "team" arbitrary, one realizes that the numbers are also arbitrary. What remains thus, after the excitement of an initial outcome, is a purely mediated relation between the real and its collectively-felt documentation as online experience. But the global synchronicity of the network, the rotation of the earth relative to the sun, and the media organization (via online aggregation: laptop, cell phone, and/or handheld device) that parallels real-time action each constitute real temporal conditions of expression that form the material backdrop of the event. The harmony and dissonance between these temporal layers establish the beginnings of a macro-rhythm for an alternative relativity. GVB's collectivity lies not only in the game, but a distributed net performance as an unlayering of the biopolitics of the real basketball court space. The GVB project finds itself parlaying the most simple and embodied form of play—sport—from its separate and yet integrated spheres: on one hand there is a mediated propagation, the near-far of networked collectivity and the digitized memory of embodiment; on the other, flipping the coin of competition into a Deleuze and Guattarian *line of flight* (1987). By rupturing the hierarchy of state-organized basketball into a temporary molecular networking of mutually recognized games around the world, GVB is deterritorialized relationality played one-to-one, but acknowledged and presented as a collective whole.

Bourriaud suggests that "relational art privileges intersubjective relations over detached opticality," while Rancière suggests that the political is to be located in the aesthetics these relations enable, or put differently, in their context and rhythm. Unlayering here, then, means that there is no directed outcome to the layering (the final GVB score does not really matter), no 'content' of the work that is directly manipulated into a 'finished' art product. Rather, content yields to *context*, from which rhythm emerges between the subjects present. In other words, we may only structure certain conditions of possibility from which rhythms are to emerge affectively between participants.

For Bishop (2004), this points to the potential futility of art's affective capacity as an agonistic tension between art and society, which she claims Bourriaud neglects. Examined under the current sphere of cultural production and the role of the artist as cultural producer over craftsman, what does it mean for the relation between poiesis and praxis? To make or create (*poiesis*) stands distinct from the taking of political action (*praxis*), and should we operate under such a contradiction, what is left of the doing-being of this figure at a larger scale of conception? The flattening out of the sense of individual efficacy in favor of a "sense of the common" reframes one's sensibilities with respect to any concept of the whole, and it is from this point with which we begin to refer to the 'micro' in our aesthetico-politic and politico-aesthetic.

The most literal reference towards such degrees of scale should not be considered, however, as fixed subjectivities rendered merely in diminutive scope. If politics "consist in reconfigurating the partition of the sensible, in bringing on the stage new objects and subjects, in making visible that which was not visible, audible as speaking beings they who were merely heard as noisy animals" (Rancière, 2006), then microscopization involves fragmentation with other conceptions of a space-time continuum—a variable perspective to the particular, the sensible, to ways of being together. What we may determine of a 'microaesthetics' involves an intensive variation in context acknowledged in particular by Bourriaud, but, as Bishop points out, there is something further to consider beyond the promise of participation from a select public. To juxtapose art and a socius may involve more than a one-to-whole relation, and the crux of our argument lies here, as another conception of relation embodied—*whole-as-one*. For a politics to be affective, it cannot remain as an abstract body, devoid of the intersubjectivity of relation. And thus, we must reframe micropolitics as another viewpoint upon public, one step further than Rancière's (2006) "reconfiguration of the visibility of the common." He considers such a shift in the aesthetics of politics to be one of dissensus, but what we would like to emphasize with our artistic practices are redistributions of the relation, new links between text, image and meaning, and the potentiality of co-emergence.

Our work spans the terrains of the urban environment, sport, media and local/networked communities. While they manifest themselves in very different ways, projects like Global Village Basketball and the HomeShop initiative attempt parallel re-imaginations of the common based upon a "micropolitics of movement," as Erin Manning (2009) suggests, in which movement goes beyond the immediate physicality of sport or the nuanced perturbations of urban flow. We

attempt to address a micropolitics of affect, in which our movements "are of us and with us: we recompose with them. In this way they are much more dangerous and much more powerful than content-driven politics. They are politics for the making. Affect makes bodies even as it is made by bodies. It preempts what a body can do" (Manning, 2009, p. 137).

In other words, to "invent possible relations with our neighbors," we seek to set into motion a model of constraints that may enable or disable certain outcomes after which emergence more or less takes its course. This of course begs the question of a political responsibility, and in this sense Manning shares Bishop's concern about the *quality* of the political relations brought into being, with the additional caveat that the relation itself feeds back into and reinvigorates those subjects that constitute the relation. Hence, the micro approach in both aesthetic and political senses must be understood as what Brian Massumi (2002) refers to as *ontogenetic*: they are processual movements rather than fixed or captured motions. Unlayering the relational fibers and their links to a politics of the network, simultaneous and intertwined singularities, offers us as artists and theorists at least a retrospective opportunity to retrace these processual movements.

Risk and Exchange.

Bourriaud (2002) points out that "contemporary art is definitely developing a political project when it endeavours to move into the relational realm by turning it into an issue." The first political act of relationality is to create the conditions of possibility for such relation, followed by the risk of reciprocation with a possibly non-participatory other. In the absence of controlled conditions for such exchange to occur (*e.g.* the white box of the gallery or museum, the designated boundaries of the sporting ground), such acts also include a greater risk of exercising agency, of addressing the common while rendering oneself vulnerable to it. Engaging the public sphere, both as socius and as politicized space is an offer of relation more tenuous than those of consumer and producer or artist and audience. Not all bonds are the same, as Steven Shaviro (2003) reminds us: *connectivity*, the relatively enclosed mode of continuously in-touch, electronically-networked being-in-the-world, is rapidly becoming hegemonic at the expense of more aleatory interpersonal *contact*. There seems to be serious political

consequences if discourse and dialogue are confined merely to the potential echo chamber that is one's neighbourhood of connections in the network. What, then, are the consequences of such communication for our consideration of relational aesthetics?

As Bourriaud suggests, the artist essentially offers "bonding factors" that allow for the relation to endure within the temporary zone that constitutes the aesthetico-political space-time. Such "microtopias" offer the relation merely as an emergent potentiality without a designation towards their end. Community-based work is interesting in this respect as it does not suffice to say that 'the community' is the goal of the work. In the example of HomeShop, the artistic intervention owes to an existing community, yet it does not point to a particular motivation for that community.

Located in the centre of Beijing on one of its old *hutong* alleyways, HomeShop is a 25 square-meter store space turned sleeping-working-living studio which uses its window front as the beginning point from which to examine our ways of relaying between public and private, the commercial and pure exchange as such. Its community and audience consists of a shrinking neighbourhood of steadfast old Beijingers intersected by strolling tourists visiting the old city, and the new youth of China—hipsters born of the post 80s single-child policy and an ever-growing middle class.

HomeShop is an open platform, working diversely via the realms of art, theory, community practice and urban research to explore the possibilities of the microaesthetic and the micropolitical. To explore in such a manner is to an attempt to adhere to the givens within the particular context of this street: China's own race for "world-worthiness" and hyperspeed socioeconomic development means a multitude layering of the old and new, ancient architecture and the constant hammering of do-it-yourself, makeshift construction. The documentation of that which is embedded in this particular everyday is a way of relating to another: an emerging community, a friendly nod, the minor practices of daily routine, and the oft neglected spectacular banal. All pass by HomeShop's window front, and it is right here that we begin to engage the certain potentialities in our very midst.

Such potential is part of the open exchange necessary to make HomeShop work. The *negotiation* of how we follow that which already exists, or introduce something new or

unexpected into the framework, is an *approximation* between relations. As the creator or intervening party, these relations are asymmetrical and involve different amounts of risk. And this *risk* of exercising agency—of synthesizing the spoken and unspoken elements of negotiation and approximation, and addressing the other—this is the exchange of potentiality, without end, the offer.

What is the *offer*? Generally speaking, the offer is relationality itself—understood to include the emergent potentialities generated through the enabling constraints posed by an artwork. For HomeShop's first project series, entitled *Games 2008*, the framework of Beijing and the Summer Olympic games was used as a grid from which to allow indeterminacies to converge and reappear—a way of building common spaces from the urban environment and community practice. Events, interventions and activities organized at HomeShop were marked by a countdown toward the *end* of the Games, an echo to the nation-wide public displays of arousal during the countdown to 08.08.08. Varying scales of activities took place, from field recordings to a party in honour of the "losers," from street-side viewings of the Games to impromptu stoop-front discussions with neighbours. A secondhand clothing collection station invited curious passers-by to come in and interact with the space, and free giveaways from participating artists aimed at offering, within the daily routes of local residents, minor-scale potentialities for our ways of engaging and relating with the community and public space. It is these potentialities that form the offer of HomeShop, to audiences, participants and creators alike.

The *Games 2008* series of events began with the opulent Opening Ceremonies festivities taking place not so far away at the National Stadium, multiplied thousands of times over by public viewing squares across the city and television screens worldwide. On *Xiaojingchang*, the "Alley of the Small Sutra Factory", however, a small personal initiative to turn HomeShop's own viewing screen into a public telecast beaming out into the street transformed the optics of familiarity (television) to a haptic molecular form as simple and positive as *getting to know you better*. As Bourriaud suggests, "this is the precise nature of the contemporary art exhibition in the arena of representational commerce: it creates free areas, and time spans whose rhythm contrasts with those structuring everyday life, and it encourages an inter-human commerce that differs from the 'communication zones' that are imposed upon us."

The screen on which the Opening Ceremonies telecast was projected thus served not only as a threshold between the private of the home and the public of the street, but in relation with the other part-subjects that formed the assemblage of the opening night event served also as a threshold and smooth passage into a nomadic art space. A deliberate contrast to the more clearly codified spaces of the city, such as the veritably "Disney-fied" 798 arts district, the "art space" of HomeShop is ambiguous: it may be someone's living room, or a commercial enterprise, or it may be the entire street and all that occurs within it. These temporary autonomous zones overlap and intersect with the different activities organized, and as such it makes pronounced the possibility of relations that existed there prior as mere human traffic: the local residents of the *hutong*, young artists from elsewhere in the city, expatriates, tourists and those capillarized agents of the state security apparatus referred to as *chengguan*.

As in the Global Village Basketball project, the relationship between these micro-encounters generated in the real space of the event is here remodeled and inseparable from its transmission and documentation. On a street where neighborhood committees serve as avid watchdogs for a complex network of security and control, how people report, comment and advise upon HomeShop's activities becomes a parallel network of relationality and the community. The crowd gathered in front of the screen moans disapprovingly of passing cars that block the view, others call the police and complain about the noise levels. Press capture the events as part of their Olympics coverage, and of course as artists we are documenting the entire process as happening, activity or event, using the vocabulary of the integrated spectacle while considering the overlooked motions of individual agency to be found in its midst.

Gesture and Tango.

Building upon the work of Varro and Aristotle, the central thesis of Giorgio Agamben's (2000) essay "Notes on Gesture" is that gesture—a means without an end—stands separate from production or *poiesis* (a means to an end) and action or *praxis* (an end without a means), and in the process opens a new dimension of the political. It is an embodiment of intersubjective means without ends that Agamben locates in the gesture, "the exhibition of a mediality ... the

process of making a means visible as such," (2000, p. 58), its pure being-in-language forming an important node in his political thought.

Following Deleuze, Agamben suggests that gesture rather than image constitutes the fundamental element of cinema. As the age of cinema has matured (and with it, the society of spectacle), we have consequently lost our gestures. It is precisely because of an ability to expropriate gesture from skilled bodies (in cinema or in related mediums such as sport and videogame) and commodify it for sale to unskilled bodies, then, that gesture becomes a zone of politics.

Perhaps nowhere is this expropriation of gesture from skilled bodies more apparent than in with the media and communications complex that constitutes professional and quasi-amateur high performance sport. In the GVB project, every pickup game could be uploaded and logged as points for either the Red team or the Blue team. Photos could also be uploaded in order to see the other people playing in the Global Village Basketball game around the world that day. Over two thousand baskets were scored by hundreds of players across six countries during the 24-hour period of the game.

This potentiality created with the Global Village Basketball event stands in contrast with Antonio Negri's (2008) analysis of biopolitical spaces and the possibility of the urban milieu to offer a potential site for opposition and resistance. Key to his analysis is the built city as the site of intersection between the "political diagonal" and the "biopolitical diagram":

> The biopolitical diagram is the space in which the reproduction of organised life (social, political) in all its dimensions is controlled, captured, and exploited – this has to do with the circulation of money, police presence, the normalisation of life forms, the exploitation of productivity, repression, the reining in of subjectivities. In the face of this, there is what I call a "political diagonal", in other words the relation that one has with these power relations, and which one cannot but have. *The problem is to know what side you are on: on the side of the power of life that resists, or on the side of its biopolitical exploitation*. What is at stake in the city often takes shape in the struggle to re-appropriate a set of services essential to

> living: housing; water, gas and electricity supply; telephone services; access to knowledge and so on (emphasis added).

Though Negri's understanding of political action as always being intimately interwoven with the space of biopolitical production is important, his problematic choice of metaphor gives the analysis as a whole the appearance of being overly reductionist and binary. Purportedly contra the biopolitical space of lines and vectors and the subjectivities produced therein, Negri's concept of the "political diagonal" is essentially just another line or vector, bisecting or cutting in two ("know what side you are on"). Though the political diagonal works counter to the grid of biopolitical production or the biopolitical diagram, it certainly seems to do so within the same geometry and logic.

We can discuss this in the context of the basketball court space and its biopolitical diagram. Basketball exists as a disciplinary space with two enclosed goals catalyzing of field of productive potential, while coaches and referees ensure that productivity is maximized within a rule of sporting law. But once the players in such a game are actually moving, emergence complicates the matter. When the coaches and referees are removed from the game, as with the pickup context of GVB, the emergent properties are even further foregrounded—the diagonal of *which side are you on* becomes ever more difficult to locate. Instead, the participants passed from side to side: from body to image, from local community to spectacle, from self to other through relation. Gesture, the embodied "exhibition of a mediality" and "process of making a means visible as such" (Agamben, 2000, p. 58) is what stood as the primary relational bonding agent that held together the emergence of the collective game.

> Gesture is an operative concept: a mode of criticism or thinking visually that is fundamentally relational and intermedial. Rather than carving up the object domain, we might simply allow that the media character of a given object is revealed, as it moves, in slippages and interactions. For this reason we need to follow it wherever it leads (Bennett, 2007, p. 449).

Considering gesture in these microscale aesthetic and political contexts offers us another way of thinking about biopolitical spaces and our opportunities for mutual agency therein. In Erin Manning's (2007) elaboration of the tango, she locates in the co-emergent embodied gesture that is the dance a model for intersubjective politics. The tango is a continual negotiation

between two dancing bodies, one of which leads the other during performance while at the same time always being led. Never a perfect replica of the other's body in negative space, for there is always a zone of approximation, a zone in which the unspoken remainder of negotiation resides, a zone of fuzzy logic or error.

The problem with Manning's tango is that it is usually a two-person dance, or a predominantly binary form of gesture and communication: the several is neglected. Perhaps pickup sport, as with Global Village Basketball, offers us an example of how the tango-as-dance becomes multiple? Pickup sport fragments the binary relation of the tango's negotiation into part-subjects and many-relations that wholly adequate themselves to a field of potentiality emerging in real-time. That such activity itself forms a competitive endeavour remains secondary to this a priori phenomenon of coming together—we co-emerge with our teammates and opponents at the same time.

The tango and its negotiations are primarily haptic forms of gesture and communication that may be contrasted with a State power relation operating in a more optic sense of individualization and surveillance. But Foucault reminds us that

> the Panopticon must not be understood as a dream building: it is the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form; its functioning, abstracted from any obstacle, resistance or friction, must be represented as a pure architectural and optical system … a figure of political technology that may and must be detached from any specific use (1977, p. 205).

Hence the biopolitical diagram that optimizes the function of the prison also allows, with the necessary modifications, for the optimization of the factory, hospital, school or stadium: the capillarization of power enabled by this abstract diagram may be translated from one space of discipline to another. Even as these sites of enclosure are in a general state of crisis and permeability, the abstract diagram survives by adapting its striating function and leveraging haptic techniques in the service of administrative vision.

Similarly, though in contrast, we should acknowledge that the tango is itself not simply a form of dance that enjoys a particular haptic negotiation between its dancing bodies. The tango may also be a number of self-determined and networked communities more or less simultaneously

playing pickup basketball around the world. It may also be the affective politics of the Opening Ceremonies viewing party and subsequent HomeShop events. Like the panopticon, in other words, we ought to recognize the tango as an abstract diagram or general architecture of embodied micropolitics that may, with the necessary modifications, be applied to different forms of coming-together or community. Instead of diagonally cutting across the biopolitical space in which it exists, the diagram of the tango layers over top, creating points of articulation or thresholds between the two—*we are on both sides at once*.

Antagonism and Averaging.

The both-and quality of this double articulation suggests an agonistic dialectics of relational art and its potentials. Bishop (2004), citing Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, identifies the necessity for antagonism and conflict necessary to sustain a democratic society. As HomeShop and GVB suggest, however, antagonism is decentered from its terms of identity relation and focus is embedded within the relation itself. The antagonism programmed into the biopolitical diagram is deprogrammed in its emergence as tango. But as Rancière points out, the defusion of dissensus (consensus) is actuality a remove from the "aesthetics of politics", towards a reframing

> in its own way the field of its objects. It also shapes in it own way the space and tasks of artistic practice. For instance by replacing matters of class conflict by matters of inclusion and exclusion, it puts worries about the 'loss of social bond', concerns with 'bare humanity' or tasks of empowering threatened identities in the place of political concerns. Art is summoned thus to put its political potentials at work in reframing a sense of community, mending the social bond, etc (2006, p. 11).

This is the "politics of aesthetics", not a mere occupant to fill the gaps left by weakened political conflict, but a call or offer to challenge and reshape a coming politics, "at the risk of testing the limits of its own politics" (Rancière, 2006).

When HomeShop organized a “Loser’s Party” as part of its *Games 2008* series of events, a tongue-in-cheek challenge was addressed to the spirit of competition addressed by the official Games and its dark underbelly of nationalism, athlete doping and political-economic inequality. Obviously marginalized from the core spectacle and its exorbitantly priced seats, the Loser’s Party became a free celebration for all those who were not there, could not be an athlete, or did not win a medal. To approach the Games in this way, as a direct redistribution of its commonly esteemed tenets of athleticism, the union between men and nations, and human spirit, we beg the question of this dissensual stage from which to establish new meanings and possibilities. During the event, HomeShop organized its own interactive competition entitled “wii would like to play // we don’t have tickets*”.* Using the shopfront projection, Wii videogame style sprint heats of the Mario and Sonic 100-meter dash matched party-goers with one another. Of course, to be the loser of a running sprint would have been too easy an incentive for the award prize of two Olympic event tickets, so the ‘spirit of competition’ was tweaked to give the most *average* runner the final claim to the award. By calculating the median time of all 36 participants and locating the individual time closest to that median, HomeShop’s winner-loser is the Everyperson. This juxtaposition of timetables and alternative use of measured race times emerged quite unintentionally as an example of a point of articulation between the biopolitical diagram of the Olympics as spectacle and the tango of the temporary community that participated that evening. And the most average runner/Wii player? A local woman in her 50s, not the type one would normally find in the privileged spaces of Olympic participation (nor perhaps in those of art, either), but somewhere in between, a representative instead for a participation in the everyday.

With the woman of “wii would like to play // we don’t have tickets”, as with Global Village Basketball and the HomeShop project in general, one sees “oneself” in the average, in the point at which we find a politico-*esthétique* in the being-doing motions of daily life.

> To appropriate the historic transformations of human nature that capitalism wants to limit to the spectacle, to link together image and body in a space where they can no longer be separated, and thus to forge the whatever body, whose *physis* is resemblance—this is the good that humanity must learn how to wrest from commodities in their decline (Agamben, 1993, p. 50).

The work presented in this paper are attempts to engage those elements of the spectacle most concerned with image or representation: with HomeShop, the Opening Ceremonies screen projection and *hutong* party; with Global Village Basketball, the score and photo data uploaded to various social media applications (blogs, YouTube, Facebook); and with "wii would like to play // we don't have tickets", it is the Olympic-themed videogame. But each of these projects also linked together, in some small way, image and body in a fashion suggesting Agamben's thought. HomeShop's Opening Ceremonies had the embodied intensity of a street party on a humid Beijing summer night; Global Village Basketball, the sweat and bruises of pickup competition; while "wii would like to play // we don't have tickets*"* had the manic arm-pumping of the gyroscopic videogame controller.

The threshold returns once again. In this self-reflexive phase of our mutual research-creation, those emergent properties of each project we have attempted to unlayer suggest a passage, however temporary its spatial presence, between representation and embodiment. For those co-producers of the artwork in attendance, this passage—or threshold—was surfed: a relational wave between the semiotics of spectacle and the fleshy embodiment of knowing by simply being together. As Fotini Lazaridou-Hatzigoga (2008), a HomeShop contributor, suggests in her contribution to the 穿 *Wear* journal, "the threshold emerges as the home of potentiality, a small heterotopia that we go through everyday—in space, in time, in our thought" (p. 148). It appears in retrospect that the threshold is where a contemporary aesthetics of politics and politics of aesthetics emerges and is negotiated, to whatever microscale possible. Is this the task of relational aesthetics today? To reconfigure embodiment and relation to and of the common, to explore the spaces of media and art to bring together image and body, and, as Lazaridou-Hatzigoga suggests of the threshold at the conclusion of her essay, *to imagine if we were to linger there just a little bit longer?*

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