



IDEA

THE LUNATIC OF ONE IDEA

BY THE LAKE:
THE LUNATIC OF ONE IDEA
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*The politics of emotion must appear
To be an intellectual construct. The cause
Creates a logic not to be distinguished
From lunacy¹*

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So we sit down, here, in another place, recalling an earlier time by the lake when walls lit up with lunacies of another order. The Mississauga site-tape for “The Lunatic of One Idea” shows me what is there to be recalled; for, with the video wall down, there is nothing but the tape to record its place, and the place records the discs devoted to filling the wall and I end up in a construct where a wall is but a picture in another place.

That is a pithy thing to add to the dog food and the water and the car trips and the lady who eats her shoe. But what do the mall-inhabitants do when confronted with the splendour I am begged to answer for? They drink hot brown water and chew frozen dead milk; they look up and wait for someone to come; slide in and out of camera view as they perform passages of ambulation which have nothing to do with the wall being there. They do not see and cannot care to see how the Participaction ad comments on their excess and calls them to trim up. (Why take them to task? Why presume a missive to no address? It is the government talking and they don’t respect the letter of the law.) They have no need of the new Ford careening through the 36 monitors, chopped up into racy fragments unified by a baritone voice-over. What need they? Another Ford brought them there and, if anything, they want a GM on the way out. Surprise!

As the site tape’s gratuity, we follow one hapless citizen down the mall-street, away from the video wall. The floor streaked with red light from exit signs, the store fronts receding into film-noir—the real effect of the much-vaunted index whereby the real world is just not bright enough for magnetics to hold so that we always appear as darkness, contrast, burn-out—only to cut off just past the television store, with its multiple screens showing the same channel. And then we find a cut back, after a moment of silence, to find that he, and we, have disobeyed what comes next: the Pet Shop Boy’s call to ask “What have I, What have I, What

have I done to deserve this?" (A lie I live with.)

*. . . One wants to be able to walk
By the lake in Geneva and consider logic:
To think of the logicians in their graves
And of the worlds of logic in their great tombs.*

The Wall Network was a failure. You can't buy into it now (under that name) as the authorities have taken it to be a vain thing and eliminated its assets and its name under bankruptcy proceedings. What we use as a term of intellectual, if not moral failure has caught The Wall Network in the legal bind of being denominated and dispersed; I am no investigator worthy the hire to find the financials.

Suffice to say that they tried to sell time and nobody can really afford to spend the time to capture the mall people. They have already been caught if they are there and the harder work of persuasion goes on elsewhere: in the home, on the car radio, in the office gossip of, "Yes I got it there. I'd never seen so many things contained under one roof." Then, the roof gives way for our view and we see that a conflict comes across the wire and it's "Out of Africa" on 13, "Return of the Jedi" on 11 and "North-by-Northwest" sandwiched in between. Who's to say who is a hawk and what's a handsaw, if we are reduced to this type of displacement?

As a year-long pilot, The Wall Network could not fill its space. Infant of a residual world of consumer displays, it attracted neophytes and big spenders—those most desperate to change their form of public access. Only they would bother to query. Just who would sit and watch images when the objects are so close at hand? Only they could even consider the supplementary totality thus encumbered. Someone beyond our reach, some body, some figure we can hold on to, who might be beyond our call, who might be an infinitesimal or at least minuscule portion of our share. Who do we miss the most and just who do those above want to reach—just who, what being, in their right mind, is the right hook into another source of market success, another grantable constituency, another gang to placate in this seemingly endless and paranoid series of gangs?

*Lakes are more reasonable than oceans, Hence,
A promenade amid the grandeurs of the mind,
By a lake. with clouds like lights among the grand tombs,
Give one a blank uneasiness, as if
One might meet Kosantinov, who would interrupt with his lunacy.*

It is simply names which work today: you can supply your own so that I can raise the question without revealing mine. A list of shops, one for the A-team, one for the elusive short-list, one for somebody who replaces the tailor I left behind. The images are there for the unconvinced and no one enters Square One without being already cubed to fit the matrix thus described. Remind them of the names—Greyson, Wodiczko, Lasovich/Simmons, Klein, Garnet, Burgin, Frenkel, Mulvey.

Did you see how pointy black heels were cut in with sport shoes last week? (What brand?) How, if she could walk, would a babe appear if her heels were able to make her run? How, to ask again, how about that nice back-brace Benjamin described. The photo took so long that one had to be supported; it was the best for the dead children who will be remembered as Horst, Willhemina, Chritian, and Solweig. So, what if one just ran Benji down the line and hooked up with a device that could keep you upright before the picture was snapped, before its after-image was even thought about? Why wait around for the mall-side booth when it is always possible to be a picture and a passport? Aura me over and name me twice. All you have to find is the right source of misrecognition. Our birth in advertising.

These pictures, fractured and orchestrated in the zero-place of the mall-street, were screened for a flaneur beyond their knowing. The mallster is able to get into contact with the things sold, has little distance from the fantasies of transport that the screen can figure. In the new type of street the mall makes (inside-out and waiting for wagons to spray the inhabitants), the restrictions of choice comes as comfort to his/her sensibility. If anything, he and she are there to participate in making images previously screened into a reality of knowing places and contours, a surface longing; an amorphous desire that the mall puts to use by being promiscuous in a way the street can never be.

A street always pre-figures its inhabitants. They may be from another place and be passing through, unattached to its individuality, but, like the lakes in ourselves, the street hopes to lure them in, to gain attention because it is unique among all the streets it surrounds.

*He would not be aware of the lake.
 He would be the lunatic of one idea
 In a world of ideas, who would have all the people
 Love, work, suffer and die for that idea*

Neither human warmth, nor atavistic desire will make a subject worthy of watching. But I watched, in a room I knew well, and chose the tapes for display. The Wall, then, seemed to deny what I have written and come to suspect. It seemed, in that cenacle, to be written wider

than anything I'd seen before. It commanded attention if only because its novelty promised to deliver the manipulation we had waited for. Not some sort of implant so much as a pleasure-unit, a sort of addition that, like the scotch in a boilermaker, made the usual brew into a chill. What if they came to the mall and found a wall displaying, almost in mimicry of the home, the hopes and fears contained off-site—what extra rapture could be added into the already spaced-out and capitalized zone of drop because you shop, eat because you need meat, shop around and then think? Well, the Wall held promise then, promise for a supposed public imaginary because they came and because we chose to pick on them.

Everyone is prone to excitement and I failed on this point, for, when it came time to choose, there was a loss within me. Where would the Wall touch another and who would touch that point where images became impetus? Some wanted to plaster the spectacle as if it were a band-aid to the wound while others took the route of living within the construct. Mallster-thought, a place of commands and pictures, a space demanding control but permitting diversion; asking for a place among the goods where a message could replace a good (art-for-art echoing within the imaginary; all things can go astray but for the form of the address and the type of input relayed. Take this grid as form; take it here, in this spot, and be gracious about it).



So a number of things went on :

—A dog, wandering, eating, spliced up so that parts of his torso stay in place as he eats from a different part of the bowl (rhythm soundtrack made-up from old synth-collab, Ben Smit, director); cf., Samuel Beckett: “Habit is the ballast that links a dog to its vomit.” Pet me so that the difference between what you want and what you need . . .

—Looking at professional mallsters, taking their brace in line and showing someone else how coolly they approach the camera; security is never a concept for the shopper and being looked at is part of the problem before it's part of the solution. Look again: that boy that comes in at the end is too swift for the mall-game. A sure-to-see he is no 'burburian though he appears mightily disturbed and all-but-downtown from the on-site look—oh yeah, Grandmaster says “Don't push me coz I'm close to the edge”. Sure, for this guy, the edge is a credit limit and that communicates to the gang that looks good before they leap the well. (Tom Taylor/Rosemary Heather)

—Oh, nothing can go wrong; smooth soundtrack, sounds like something I could sing at a rally. Very good, as our known-lake comes in the trail of foam from a boat and those tootsies done up for the beach. There is the cranky faux-Mahler and the faux-disco picks up the beat to leave our Mann on the beach. Oh, this is not a Death in Venice, but it is a star turn. Tell

them all, all the rubber-footed lot of them, that their dread is constructed to fill a grave and expect them to act as if what mattered was what went down on the sand. Never so right, but I wonder what is somehow unfulfilled in giving Mississauga a view of life along the lakeshore. Lou Reed just took his face off on MuchMusic, to the lyrics “Love is trust/No money down”. (John Greyson)

—Column up! I’m calling for an order of toast and everyone falls down on me. The trio (pillar, Wonderbread, and toasty slice) meet their match in an out-take from the Art of Noise. Which, despite its anchored lineage, is what goes on here and may make this few minutes the ones worth staking a claim upon. The charm of the useless holds the pleasure of being mistaken. What I can’t see for the trees is the sky through a beat-box toy. (Dennis Day, Chris Martin, Sue Rynard)

—Please Stand Aside. Indeed, the voice-over (which lasts but a minute) sets us up to hear more from her. But the images move too fast—as if in generational increments—from the office to the fire of the factory and the after-burn of the shuttle, to money, Mammon, opening the doors unto the world. But always the world seen through those blinkers of a power attempted everyday. Is nothing to be risked in the face of futile, or, as this sequence would have it, genetic forays into control? Righteously passed over, I sense no danger in watching the world turn, for all will win out as the forces pass by me. Free at last, free at last . . . to drift as archaic. Please take up my train. (Nancy Paterson)

—The greeny sea, mother to-be, my past comes back as salty, foreign cheeks. Water-wall, as only a mike can make it to the ear, but never cleansing, always sullyng the solids we know to lurk behind the fluid screen. How to make this moment all-one and sufficient? We can see the ruined turrets and hear the interrupts of the diva and the train. Tunnel-in and then come out to see the credits (Eva Marie Saint of the Twentieth-Century). There is the lake and the mind, and we go through the window to be set loose to bob on the inland sea. Once ice moved, here scurrying as it melted to grind down porous rock to leave furrows and drumlins and a hole to become a lake behind. Logic then becomes a process of drinking in, and, now, Lady Chatterly’s on the screen with Sylvia Kristel as the forlorn wife making a mockery of what was already a bit of a sailor’s story. Life should be such that our breath was punctuated by a diva. (Laura Mulvey, which I watch again and again.)

—Hey, You Mass! Listen up! No one hear but us short-term screamers. “TELL/NELL/ (see the bell)/YELL HELL/HELL!” Never trust a god-star. Nell’s cartoon-visage translates as condescension as we count the grains of the beach. Go to the Superstore and they yell at the kids and everyone around disproves. (United Media Art Studies, on the wing for you.)

—Tell me true, my Vera, is religion like shopping or is shopping religious? Does every angle have its angel, or each preacher his cher pre? (Lacroix put this one to him.) Story beats

anagrams every time, but what is in place to hold them to the mall-state: so many things to read from the surface that there is no time for text. No intonation, but none needed because the feudal process of providing the narrative before the letter has given way, rent like a cloak or a stall, to the modern world where the globe is like the tire around my tummy. (Vera Frenkel)

—Better to punctuate with the grid, moving and freezing all the questions. (She is going to eat it, the little tramp!) Yes, \$82.37 last month on \$1257.96, charges, \$20.49. Your payment has not reached us, but . . . The grid organizes the word so sparingly, making the screens barred like teeth, the matrix a fallible unit, and the question into a probe that sort of tickles. (What if you walk on them all day and then boil them, would the salt do some good?) This is the best way to catch the eye, on the way out the door, and the language has its logic. The mall is formed of a survey, begat on a parking lot, and lives heartily with infusions of plastic and the pulses of bodies through its core. (Isn't that what softens them up?) And, although confessional, this is not ecclesiastic but conscientious. To look out through the grid and ask as if there were another word other than yes. (Krzysztof Wodiczko)

—My favourite story, told twice and 36-times two: they embrace over and over, the coffee spilled under the tower's gentle one-eyed gaze. Boom, Pachabel, so moving and so funeral that it is the favourite 'classic' tomb-tune in the world. Ideogram for the lake and the vault, I grow weak on its recall—so much did it shade my life there, so many times I saw it and her and the thing spilt. (Victor Burgin)

—Another lyric on the water edge, and why not get to know our finny friends? The overdone noise of leaks and the flow of the seal coming in at the camera so smooth and speckled with moulds and stinking emerald water, coming out and sectioning off to then slip away. Sort of queasy what with the flippers and the fur undulating. How to tell the seal from the sea if not in the tank? (Rhonda Abrams)

—We love them and then we kill them; America doing both at once. Mixing the narrative and pulling out all the stops on those little cheeky bums on the adverts and the way we feed them in McDonald's (sure site for a molester) because every bit of a kid's pleasure is magnified in the custodial eye. Then the death toll, the missing-part aching to be prodded and massaged into our own home and the kid being tagged, drawing on the wall the continual attraction of their helpless ability to be lost and found, disappeared by us. But the thing here is the equation and not the passing of intelligence—the burger linked to the milk carton and tied to the anchorwoman's intoned "non-custodial parent". Someone profits from all this attention and what is perpetuated is the rumour that when they chew we wanna suck. (Michael Klein)

—The old self-reflex of showing them where you came from—"Shopping Trip." Me too on the freeway back then, back seat, the eyes in training for what to see out the window. And

seeing nothing but home, the garbage and the flowers, freeway and yard. The ultimate conceit being when the mall becomes the home and the spot in the lot is the driveway. Dad avoids mowing the lawn while Mom waters the tar. Best use of the grid as window here, glazed panes each allowing a parallax; the hand-held camera becoming an old love of the tripper's bored gaze. (Caroline Simmons/William Lasovich)

—Cross-reference to Klein, but watch how the little one is reigned-in as the warning gets worse. Helpless. The lake is poisoned like the corrupt way he is treated. But what to do when the mesh is so exact? The water will kill you, and you can't stay away. What remains is the matter of the sophisticated lack of match that is so cool and clear. Tasteless, watery, Oedipus. (Eldon Garnet)

—I can hardly see the last one—all details multiplied across the six-by-six. Ending in a mouth but starting in a purse, some sticks and another colour in there for decor. There is the idea here of the repetition being compensation for the individual cell allotted to each and all. See not yourself sixty feet high, but so many more than one, so many selves all cloned in a flip from the dancefloor track. Pulse it out, get the seriality of the mall, and punch through to the quiet of lips bared and the grid becomes the mouth that does not speak for all the noise of the detail. The lips mouthing what has come to be heard everywhere else. Oxymoron leading to hyperbole, so that the end is open-faced but calls for SHHH. (Kass Banning)

*In a world of ideas. He would not be aware of the clouds,
Lighting the martyrs of logic with white fire.
His extreme of logic would be illogical*

But the beautiful simplicity of the mall, its attraction for those wishing for risk-free investment, is that it sucks its fluid in without pausing for breath. Ignoring consciousness of individuality, but sustaining itself as merely a shifting series of spaces for let, it nevertheless attracts a predictable set of clients. A chain-store and a chain to follow: the Dilex bunch; with them, the Birks and Bowrings, and the Signor Angelo's, the Body Shops and the Bed Shoppe; and, with them, the Bombay Store and the St. Marks; and with them the Jean Machine and the Aquariama. The requisite Cineplex begets the Orange Julius and the A & W and the United Cigar Store picks up the rear with the Ho Chi Minh and the lone flower store (who came to death asking what a grotesque thing a rose is?). They come, as if they had place cards, so long as the hours allow, for it is the place and not the activity that draws them in. Going there is always superfluous since some other promise is involved rather than simple transaction.