ART vs DESIGN:

SAVING POWER vs ENFRAMING, OR A THING OF THE PAST vs WORLD-MAKING

Mark Titmarsh and Cameron Tonkinwise

This paper is a dialogue—or, a slice of ongoing dialogue; a kind of fight in progress—between the authors.

Some background material:

1 Mark is a practicing artist. Cameron is a design theorist. Mark is committed to the significance of art, Cameron to the significance of design.

2 Mark and Cameron were, for a long time, colleagues in a design school. Design is a relatively recent profession and not yet a discipline. Design schools tend to be either the technical, commercial embarrassments of art colleges, or the soft, aesthetic embarrassments of technology institutes. Because of its precarious emergent status, design has a defensive enmity with art.

3 What brings Mark and Cameron together, and puts them in dispute, is Heidegger and post-Heideggerian thinking. Both Mark and Cameron find in Heidegger a relational post-aesthetics of "making think-work"[1] that clarifies and furthers their attempts to respond to the dominion of technological metaphysics. It is just that Mark believes that this 'remembering-clearing' lies on the art side of the art/technology divide whereas Cameron believes that it lies on the technology side.

The following dialogue is a vehicle for us to propose some of the ideas that we are working on. For Mark, this is making expanded paintings, for Cameron, making engaging things.

Apart from the pragmatic institutional issues hinted at above, what is at stake in our debate? Perhaps everything; that is to say, if you believe Heidegger, at stake is the future of human beings in the face of technology's cessation of history.

The issue that always troubles readers of Heidegger on technology is: if the essence of technology is its totalising nature, how are we to respond? If all causal reactions to technology remain technological, what is to be done?

We begin with the assumption that Heidegger is misinterpreted when cast as an apologist for acquiescence, a quasi-spiritual giving in to, or waiting for the end of, techno-being. For example, when Heidegger risks this sort of rhetoric around the term *Gelassenheit*, such 'releasement' requires much effort—one must be active in becoming passive. Less extreme, but more common, is Heidegger's valorisation of thinking itself as a response to techno-being, in particular, the sort of thinking associated with questioning. As is often noted, the opening line of his essay "The Question Concerning Technology" italicises the verb 'questioning': "In what follows we shall be *questioning* concerning technology. Questioning builds the way" (Heidegger 1977, 3). And the essay concludes,

> The closer we come to the danger, the more brightly do the ways into the saving power begin to shine and the more questioning we become. For questioning is the piety of thought. (Heidegger 1977, 35)

However, on these occasions, Heidegger's concern is still for a thinking that is 'in action'. Such questioning is not a removed, inactive contemplation, but rather an engaged responsiveness. It is, as we will argue, very much with and of the process of making. This is precisely Heidegger's point; he aims to retrieve a form of making—of thoughtful making, of making thoughtful—that is no longer merely technological. He does not deny the activism of technology, but finds within it more authentic forms of revelatory action. This is why the closing sentences from "The Question Concerning

Technology" previously cited occur in the context of a discussion of art. Let us cite this passage at length, because it is the concern of the following debate:

> Because the essence of technology is nothing technological, essential reflection upon technology and decisive confrontation with it must happen in a realm that is, on the one hand, akin to the essence of technology and, on the other, fundamentally different from it. Such a realm is art. But certainly only if reflection on art, for its part, does not shift its eyes to the constellation of truth after which we are *questioning*.

> Thus questioning, we bear witness to the crisis that in our sheer preoccupation with technology we do not yet experience the coming to presence of technology, that in our sheer aesthetic-mindedness we no longer guard and preserve the coming to presence of art. Yet the more questioningly we ponder the essence of technology, the more mysterious the essence of art becomes. (Heidegger 1977, 35)

The appropriate response to technology is therefore not just philosophising, but thinking in and around the making of that which we call art. According to Heidegger's analysis, such making think-work appears to be a non-technological way of negotiating technology.

To return to our debate, we, the authors, are interested in how literally Heidegger should be read here. Does 'art' mean Art, works for the institution of art, or the *ars* of Design, products for the economy of design? Which of these is less unthinking in its making, which is more thoughtful or thought-provoking? Moreover, which is the more appropriate action in response to technology, which is nearer the potential for swaying the way of the world and therefore more able to accomplish a turn in our experience of being?

What is at issue in this debate between Mark (hereafter M) and Cameron (hereafter C) over Heidegger—for this paper, and for the debate about practice-based research in which it is taking place—is the role and nature of making in such thinking. Is the questioning of art that

Heidegger is calling for a considered analysis of the artefactual outcome, the finished artwork or design product, or is it a critical reflection on the process of making? If the outcome is an artwork for interpretative reception rather than a design for enactive use, how does this affect the question-worthiness of the process of making? For, surely, if the process of making is a type of research, a way of discovering knowledge, then it is thoughtful in a way that ignorant technology dangerously is not. Such research-ly making reveals exactly what technology conceals. To work out how making is a bringing-to-knowledge identifies not just why there should be a validation of practice-based research but also, in the context of Heidegger, identifies a non-technological form of making. This is why we are fighting over which form of making—art or design—is the most significant, as research, and as the saving power within the eclipsing empire of technology.

C: What is most common in Heidegger's range of articulations of what is to be done is the constellation of *techne, poiesis, physis*, and *aletheia*. The essence of technology derives from its origin in the ancient Greek sense of *techne*, the know-how associated with *poiesis*, which Heidegger believes is a mode of revealing, *aletheia*, compatible with the model for revelation, *physis*.

This is, in some ways, the first half of "The Question Concerning Technology"; *poiesis* is the

> four ways of occasioning . . . [that] let what is not yet present arrive into presencing . . . It is of utmost importance that we think bringing-forth in its full scope and at the same time in the sense in which the Greeks thought it . . . *Physis* also, the arising of something from out of itself, is a bringing forth, *poiesis*. *Physis* is indeed *poiesis* in the highest sense . . . The Greeks have the word *aletheia* for revealing . . . *Techne* is a mode of *aletheueuin* . . . Technology is a mode of revealing . . . And yet the revealing that holds sway throughout modern technology does not unfold into a bringing-forth in the sense of *poiesis*. The revealing that rules in modern technology is a challenging. (Heidegger 1977, 10–14)

The second half of "The Question Concerning Technology" suggests that a response to technology involves recovering the *poietic techne* that remains with/in technology as challenging-forth.

So, if the *techne* of *poiesis* affords a way of being with, without succumbing to, techno-being(lessness), how are we to translate these Greek terms? Should we understand the *techne* of *poiesis* to be the making associated with artwork or designing?

M: My side of the argument is perhaps more straightforward since Heidegger does explicitly and frequently suggest that *techne* be translated as 'art'. For example, in "The Question Concerning Technology", he writes:

> There was once a time when it was not only technology alone that bore the name *techne*. Once there was a time when the bringing-forth of the true into the beautiful was called *techne*. Thus the *poiesis* of the fine arts was also called *techne* . . .

> Could it be that the revealing lays claim to the arts most primarily, so that they for their part may expressly foster the growth of the saving power, may awaken and found anew our look into that which grants and our trust in it? (Heidegger 1977, 34–35)

Heidegger makes it clear in "The Origin of the Work of Art" that there are two aspects to art's way of revealing that differentiate it from technics.

The first is that the *work* that works of art accomplish is the founding of worlds. Technology reveals, but reveals things to be in a profoundly unworldly way.[2] What works of art reveal are precisely other worlds, other ways of being, other clearings in which humans can dwell. They do not just reveal these worlds temporarily, they find and establish them in a sustaining way. By contrast, technology finds nothing but a generic something to be transformed into anything; it heeds no prior essence that might be holding sway, not even the outcomes of its own manufacturing, which it will recycle as an energy source just as soon as they are completed.[3]

More significantly, what keeps art from being subsumed into technics is that what art reveals are concealments. What art brings to the world is what Heidegger calls 'earth', that is, that which precisely resists being brought to the world. Earth 'shows' itself to be inherently self-secluding. Art points to what cannot be revealed. It does not reveal these secrets so much as reveal that there are secrets, and so they must remain.[4]

These concealments are material, and historical; they are what one senses as lying beyond, as other possibilities. They have to do, quite precisely, with the making of the work of art, the origin from which the artefact springs or breaks out. These earthly qualities are what cannot be completely accounted for in any reflection on practice, what one glimpses only when one attempts to carefully and thoroughly articulate the materialist history of a work of art's making.

This is why, I would suggest, Heidegger insists that these hints of a hidden 'always more' arrive only as "strife", as a conflictual resistance to the drive toward open disclosure, which Heidegger calls the 'world'.

In aesthetic terms, 'earth' and 'world' are similar to notions of form and content but are each developed in an extended phenomenological sense in their application to works of art. Earth identifies both the material aspect of the work, what it is made of, and a certain tendency within earthly natural things to withdraw, to hide, to be elusive for understanding and articulation. Similarly, world is not just the totality of objects and events but is closer to an environment that surrounds us as a matrix of meaningfulness. Nor can earth and world be considered separately; each is inextricably woven into the other. Earth must come through the world to appear at all, and the world must rest on the earth and be constituted by it. Both are aspects of disclosure, are part of an uncanny showing, the creation of an open space where something, *some thing*, can come to be. In their strife, each tries to absorb or eclipse the other; the world tends to forgetfully consume earth and ground, while earth draws the world back into its own entropy, to de-historicise and de-contextualise. Their conflict is irresolvable and leaves a permanently open wound, but this wound, this scar, is the very pre-condition for a

Figure 1 Mark Titmarsh *Moraine* 2006, flowers, synthetic flowers, wheelbarrow and carpet, variable dimensions. Photographer: Arthur Georgeson.

gestalt, a shaping, that brings the work as a work into presence.

Encountering a work of art, one first catches sight of earth through the material presence of the art form, whether it is the colour of paint, the heaviness of marble, or the sound of music. Similarly, by virtue of the conflictual union, the background nature of the world is brought forward and opened up, the world is disclosed. The revealed world is an historical world, delimited by the kinds of decisions and inchoate possibilities that each age defines for itself. Heidegger suggests four ages: Greek, medieval, modern, and planetary. Planetary is dominated by technology and would coincide to some degree with postmodern globalisation. As Heidegger suggests, the essence of technology is nothing technological; its essence is technicity, a mode of relations between all kinds of beings that reduces them to mere resources for production, machination, and consumption. Yet, technicity is not to be rejected outright, since it

contains the enduring riddle of our age. It is this riddle that art reveals, indicates, and instantiates. Art's enduring strangeness, its uncanniness in the midst of the demand to be instrumental, is the revelation of a riddle.

To make this more concrete, I would like to discuss an example of my own work. In *Moraine* (2006, figure 1), a wheelbarrow spills a load of flowers onto a white carpet. The work was conceived in the context of a series of paintings that were made by pouring or spilling paint onto a horizontal sheet of aluminium. The aluminium works were made as explorations of alternative materials that could be used to make a painting. Specifically, canvas is replaced by metal, brushes by cake mixing bowls, and images by aleatory events. The play of ongoing substitution was extended through the cake mixing bowl and paint to the wheelbarrow and a load of flowers. Wheelbarrow and bowl, paint and flowers, carpet and canvas are syntagmatically connected and

ultimately perform the same function of delivering a load of colour to an impenetrable surface.

The work exists in an unusual tension between what it is and what it is not. Painting is present as an absence, a visual absence substituted by smells, fragrances, metaphors of painting. The work projects the smell of fresh flowers so intensely that it touches the nose and all the senses of those who enter the gallery. The flowers, like a painting, are intensely colourful, and, in this case, synaesthetic, giving sight and smell. Synaesthesia becomes a metaphor for inter-dimensionality in the work, an overflowing of aesthetic and physical boundaries.

The earthiness of the flowers and the technological products of wheelbarrow and carpet are brought together by a spill, an industrial accident, a loss of utility, and, ultimately, a spontaneous display of colour. The wheelbarrow, like a broken tool separated from the smooth flow of usefulness, suddenly stands out, showing the unusual shape of all its all elements, the difference between its rubber handle, metal legs, and plastic tray. One notices that the carpet is unusually placed to receive the entire spill—none has gone over the edge. The spill as an event of chaotic proportions is curiously aesthetic in its relation to all the other elements. Yet, both the barrow and the carpet are distillations of earthly materials, now curiously exposed in the artificially lit interior and the conceptually lit domain of art.

On closer inspection, the flowers are a mixture of fresh flowers, synthetic flowers, and native flowers that have been tinted to intensify their natural tones. All the flowers are heads, severed from their storks and any obvious supply of sustenance. As they die and wilt, they demonstrate their liveliness as opposed to the static endurance of the barrow and carpet as techno presences.

C: While what M has said about Heidegger is clearly true—like a good romantic, Heidegger does invest much faith in art as powerful respondent to technology—it is important to acknowledge that there are at least three caveats that Heidegger himself puts in place.

1   The ancient Greek arts "were not enjoyed aesthetically. Art was not a sector of cultural activity." The art that is being spoken about is ontological precisely to the extent that it refuses our current "sheer aesthetic-mindedness" (Heidegger 1977, 34). M's self-description of *Moraine* and its making clearly demonstrates the extent to which his work explicitly engages with, if not utterly depends on, a certain 'aesthetic reception'. I will return to this.

2   The art that is capable of challenging technology, which can found worlds by drawing on concealed material creative forces, is not just any work of art, but only 'Great Art'. Again, M touches on this when acknowledging the centrality of history to Heidegger's understanding of art. And it can also be seen in the extent to which *Moraine* involves in its making and intended reception an *agon* with the history of art. Nevertheless, the question remains whether these elements manage to push beyond institutional place-markers (in which case they would be susceptible to the previous critique of the 'culture industry') in order to found or at least attest to a wider new 'way of the world'.[5]

3   If *techne*-as-art can only be understood as Great Art, there is more than a chance that such Art is a thing of the past, something that existed "perhaps only for that brief but magnificent time" (Heidegger 1977, 34).

This is why Heidegger does not say that art *is* the appropriate response to technology, but only that it *may* be: "Whether art may be granted this highest possibility of its essence in the midst of the extreme danger, no one can tell" (Heidegger 1977, 35).

Because of these caveats and doubts, I think that it is important to consider what other pathways to dealing with technology might exist. Perhaps what Heidegger means by *techne* is better conceived as the sort of making associated with design.

I am already at a disadvantage in arguing this way since this Latinate term (Old French *dessein*, to draw; Latin *signare*, to mark) is one that Heidegger does not and would not use. Heidegger uses terms that can be productively translated by the English word 'design', but he is referring to a more abstract process of laying out possibilities or throwing forth ('*Entwurf*') rather than the process of planning the making of things of use.

My side of the debate, therefore, depends on a more-Heidegger-than-Heidegger type of argument.

I will mention two main aspects of this argument, both of which are usefully captured by Heidegger's famous use of Friedrich Hölderlin towards the end of "The Question Concerning Technology":

> The same poet from whom we heard the words
> *But where the danger is, grows*
> *The saving power also*
> says to us:
> *. . . poetically dwells man upon this earth.*
> (Heidegger 1977, 36)

Let me start with the second fragment first. Exegetes usually emphasise the adverb *poetically* when discussing Heidegger's use of this phrase. This aligns the saving power with language and thought, concerns of the later Heidegger, and philosophy in general. However, drawing attention to the verb *dwell* not only fits with Heidegger's later work but also his earlier existential analytic of *Dasein*. It also locates the saving power in the things of everyday life, in the *pragmata* and *chremata* of daily living. This is the much less metaphysical locale of design, of designed things, and design interactions with things.

It is important to remember that things are *the* ontological indicators. Ontologies are defined by how things manifest, by what counts as a thing to the peoples dwelling with and through those things. This is why the "Question Concerning Technology" was originally the third of four lectures, the first of which is "The Thing". Read together, these lectures indicate that the crux of technics is its denial of things in their thingliness. The most famous expression of this is Heidegger's account of nuclear weapons: "The atom bomb's explosion is only the grossest of all gross confirmations of the long-since-accomplished annihilation of the thing: the confirmation that the thing as a thing remains nil" (Heidegger 1971, 170).

This argument is developed most extensively in Heidegger's interpretation of Rainer Maria Rilke:

> The object-character of technological dominion spreads itself over the earth . . . Not only does it establish all things as producible in the process of production . . . the thingness of things [is] dissolve[d] into the calculated

market value . . . The frailties of things [are being replaced] by the thought-contrived fabrications of calculated objects . . . produced to be used up . . . the more quickly they are used up, the greater becomes the necessity to replace them even more quickly . . . [so that all that remains] constant in things produced as objects merely for consumption is: the substitute—*Ersatz*. (Heidegger 1971, 130)

It is precisely this "injurious neglect of the thing" that one realises in the moment of insight into the essence of technology. The appropriate response to technics therefore lies with

> unpretentious... modestly . . . and inconspicuously compliant . . . thing[s]. . . Just as it is a part of our unshieldedness that the familiar things fade away under the predominance of objectness, so also our nature's safety demands the rescue of things from mere objectness. The rescue consists in this: that things, within the widest orbit of the whole draft, can be at rest within themselves. (Heidegger 1971, 130)

Design then, the design of everyday things, is a fitting response to techno-being.

Art, as the "Origin of the Work of Art" makes clear, also manifests as things, but, for essential reasons, as no ordinary things. Works of art are very precisely more-than-things, things that allegorically transcend their thingness. This pretentiousness or immodesty means that art's response to technology is always excessive. It is rather "here and now and in the little things that we may foster the saving power in its increase" (Heidegger 1977, 33).

Let me clarify this further by taking up M's self-description of *Moraine*.

It is clear from the account of *Moraine*'s making and presentation that M was at all times seeking some sort of revelation from this constellation of products. He was not seeking some sort of representation; indeed, *Moraine* is not the depiction of anything. It would be quite inadequate to say (though M's talk of metaphors that make painting presently absent do risk this) that it is a representation of painting, or even just M's painting process, in non-paint media.

The rug is not a sign for the canvas, nor do the flowers represent the smell of drying paint. These things are not signs because they reveal too much of themselves to be merely referential. They singularly and together become presences, showing themselves to be, each in different ways. What shines in the work, beyond its reading as an installation-based portrayal of painting, is a question about how things manifest. Clearly, something ontological is going on here.

However, to what extent is this ontologicality circumscribed by occurring as art? Are the questions that come to those who view M's work, concurring with M's own account, questions that will to any extent trouble those viewers? Do these moments of insight into 'how things are'— that do seem to be involved in understanding *Moraine*—have any sustainability? While these are very designer-ly questions of effectivity, they are crucial if we are to take seriously what Heidegger says about the *historical* nature of the revelations needed in the face of technics. Does M's work *world* beyond the artworld? Is there sufficient earth-ness to the way this installation has been staged in a gallery setting for the questions that the work asks to become questions of other things elsewhere? Or is this work just turning such revelations into a game, an amusement, a distraction? Is not this making-being-appear-pretty-and-witty quintessential *Gestell*—not in the sense of making all available for use but more seriously in the sense that *Gestell* is the frame that excludes all other ways of being present? If this work does draw attention to a non-productivist-being-there, doesn't it do so precisely in the sort of way that says that such being-otherwise is now only the remit of a museum, a marginal domain of practice soon to be a thing of the past? Doesn't it attest to the abandonment of being to questions of 'is this or is this not art?'

Surely, all that M has revealed of this work's making would have been better incorporated into a commercial product-of-use. A flower-coloured wheelbarrow, a wheelbarrow impregnated with the smell of flowers, for sale in a hardware store, or even more so, in use on a building site, would be far more uncanny and question-worthy than an art piece. In its everyday use, in use in workday settings, it would be much more powerfully (and not just much more frequently and pervasively)

uncanny. Getting it sold would be quite properly a design problem, but successfully resolving that design problem would have more direct and longer-lasting, world-making outcomes. No longer delimiting itself to questions of art history, it would be freed to afford wider history making.

M: I take C as posing here the idea of marginal objects that are not-quite-art and not-quite-designed-things-of-use. Marginal objects furtively seek to survive in sequestered spaces somehow outside of global capitalism and the levelling effects of *Gestell*. But, for the moment, design, unlike art, is not empowered to produce the marginal, since it lives only in the harsh light of instrumental production and consumption. In such a context, design is the very discipline that completes the withdrawal of things. The thing, or any object of production, disappears in the hands of a consumer because its soft embodied presence is completely eclipsed by the productivism of use.

Design as a professional practice only came into existence with the flourishing of the machine age at the beginning of the twentieth century. Since then, the task of design has been as the slick facilitator and mediator of gritty production and consumption. Design is nothing more than the sugar coating of technicity, the cool cosmetic layer that conceals the 'set up' and makes destructive things apparently digestible and the disappearance of things intensely desirable.

Alain Findeli captures the essence of design as being

> determined by instrumental reason, over-emphasising the material product, as having an aesthetics based exclusively on material shapes and qualities, an ethics originating in a culture of business contracts, a cosmology restricted to the marketplace and a sense of time limited to the cycles of fashion and technological innovation. (2001, 6)

While art must also function in the marketplace and is inevitably dealt with as a commodity, its thingliness is always in play. As a thing, it continually reminds us of the *work* of the work of art, which is the ongoing eventful strife between earth and world. Ziarek writes,

Art as an aesthetic object . . . is obviously formed and produced and thus already predisposed for commodification but as a forcework it opens the different modality of an event, irreducible to product. (2004, 15)

The history of the avant-garde and contemporary art of the last century has been the reduction and abolition of art's status as a commodity and foregrounding of its nature as an event, from futurism and dada to happenings, fluxus, conceptual art, installation art, and relational art.

The shift from object to event necessitates a reconsideration of art's relation to commodification and exchange: since art resists or 'objects' specifically by refusing to be an object, the most important aspect of art's social relation is the dissolution of the related logics of the aesthetic object and the commodity. (Ziarek 2004, 105)

The art market tends to counteract this process but that is as it should be. The art market continually reminds the artist of the tension between economic productivity and the disclosure of worlds.

C: Heidegger is very explicit about the fact that *poiesis* not be translated by a manufacturing term:

What is decisive in *techne* does not lie at all in making and manipulating nor in the using of means, but rather in the aforementioned revealing. It is as revealing, and not as manufacturing, that *techne* is a bringing-forth. (Heidegger 1977, 13)

Consequently, *techne* is not manufacturing, what Heidegger in "Contributions to Philosophy" calls more generally "machination" (Heidegger 1999, 88). But this point usefully clarifies what I mean by design, as distinct from fabrication. In the quote cited above, the "aforementioned revealing" refers to the following:

Whoever builds a house or a ship or forges a sacrificial chalice reveals what is to be brought forth, according to the perspectives of the four modes of occasioning. This

revealing gathers together in advance the aspect and the matter of ship or house, with a view to the finished thing envisioned as completed, and from this gathering determines the manner of its construction. (Heidegger 1977, 13)

This Platonic-Aristotelian account of *techne* is in fact a rich description of design, or designing as thoughtful forethought or foresight. This is precisely why design is a mode of revealing, a mode of revealing in the lineage of ancient Greek *techne*, within the heart of modern manufacturing.

And for the same reason, I am unconcerned by M's suggestion that design might be at the very heart of technology. Here I am returning to the first of the two Hölderlin quotes to make my second main point about why design might be best response to technology.

For, the quote indicates not that the danger lies near the saving power but that the danger is itself the saving power. In a way typical of Heidegger, the very acknowledging of technology as a danger is the way of saving oneself from the danger. The turning is a turning within technology, not against it, or outside it. Heidegger is advocating a kind of homeopathic remedy, more of the same, once one realises that there is a difference within that sameness, the difference between design and machination, between *techne* and technology. Design is the way that moments of insight can be prompted where technology is most at home, small turns within sheer instrumentalism that afford questioning, if only now and again.

By contrast, art is not similar enough to technology. It involves a very different comportment, an un-use-ual disposition. Art today is, to my mind, still too bound to aesthetics, to the aesthetic mode of reception. It still requires a Kantian disinterest to be made, to be understood and to have valence. This is what disengages it from the danger, placing it at a remove, especially, but not only, when it exists in the protected economy of the gallery.

To this extent, art remains a thing of the past.
M: Even Heidegger allows for the possibility that one day Great Art might return and that such a return would constitute a saving of the world.
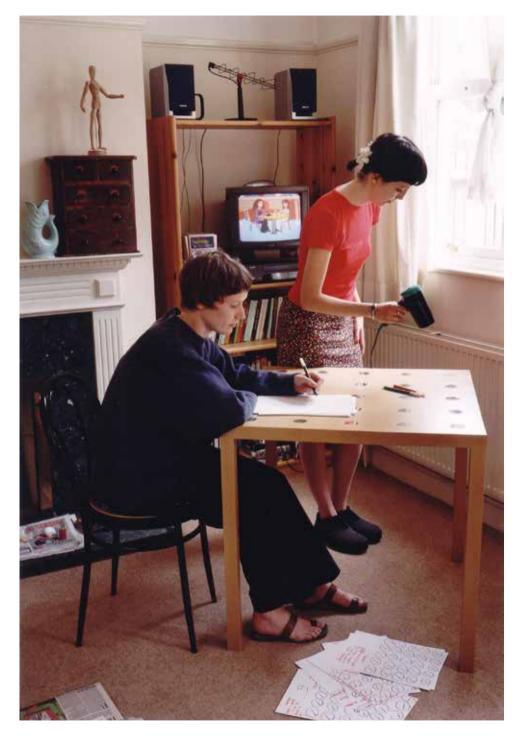
Figure 2 Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby *Compass Table* 2001, wood, instrument glass, 25 compass needles, 75 x 75 x 35cm.
Photographer: Jason Evans. Courtesy Dunne and Raby.

Though Heidegger appears to affirm Hegel when he suggests that Great Art is a thing of the past (Heidegger 2002, 205), it cannot be extrapolated to argue that the present age is entirely artless. Great Art has a very specific meaning, referring to art that played an overtly fundamental role in the life of a culture. Great Art defined cultural rituals in early societies and social hierarchies in pre-modern societies. For Heidegger, the socially determining aspect of art disappeared with the Greeks, while, for others, it was lost somewhere between post-medieval art and pre-modern art.

Great Art is equated with pre-modern art and anything after that is lesser art, art that is simply designed to generate a personal aesthetic experience. However, from modernity onwards, art becomes something more indefinite and elusive, something that proceeds by silence rather than public proclamation. In "Origin of the Work of Art", Heidegger discusses a work of *modern* art, a painting by Vincent van Gogh. He proposes that a work of art discloses a world. The question remains whether all art has the potentiality of disclosing a world or whether only Great Art can perform that function.

Krystzof Ziarek substitutes Great Art for 'radical' art. He concedes that art has lost its "force and importance", and appears to have been replaced by the "entertainment industry and information technologies" (2004, 1). He continues, "Artworks when compared with social, political or even physical forces lack any effectiveness in changing reality" (Ziarek 2004, 3). The powerlessness of art to effect change outside of its own limited domain appears conclusive. But 'power' is defined in the limited terms of technicity. Art's power, its power to reveal, its 'forcework', is neither powerful nor powerless, but powerfree.

> Art discloses an alternative to the paradigms of production, mobilisation and technical manipulation. . . . The 'less' in the adjective 'powerless' when attached to art does not necessarily mean lack of power but instead indicates an alternative economy of forces . . . Though art like everything else is produced and regulated within the power driven economy of modern being, art can become disencumbered of the governing configuration of power and open an alternative modality of relations. (Ziarek 2004, 3–4)

Ziarek's term for this kind of power is 'aphetic forcework', aphetic from *aphesis*, which means releasing, letting be, letting go.

> Art can have such a transformative effect only in a specific kind of reception, when the artwork is encountered as a work, that is, non-aesthetically, which means that, beyond its aesthetic commodity form, art is allowed to work. Thus the transformative work is itself a relation, an encounter with an artwork in which this work transforms the web of social political and cultural relations with which both the work and its reception take place. Art's transformation works not on the level of objects, people or things but in terms of the modality of relations, which in the forms of perception, knowledge, acting or valuing, determines the connective tissue of what we experience as reality. (Ziarek 2004, 28)

C: I have this suspicion that the model power-free artwork for Ziarek, and perhaps Theodor Adorno, would be one in a vault, concealed from view. It is of course typically instrumentalist to ask after 'bum's on seats', but Ziarek's aphetic artworks attest to the possibility of a world outside eco-technics, only if testifying before someone. I worry that it is not just Great Art that is a thing of the past, but art itself, contemporary art being invisible except to those with appropriate levels of cultural capital to make it their pastime. Given the giganticism of techno-being's imperialism, surely the appropriate response needs to be more strategically located if not pervasive.

Let me give a short example to compare with M's account of his own work. In the 1990s, Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby developed a series of designs as articulations of research into electromagnetic radiation. These were relatively simple pieces of furniture, such as a coffee table with compasses set into it that would map electromagnetic fields and fluctuations in a house (figure 2). These devices, in quite obvious ways, drew attention to a key infrastructure of de-thinging *technics*. Electricity is the quintessential *Bestand* or standing reserve. It is something that

results from converting any sort of matter into energy (mostly via combustion, but even nuclear decomposition), and that can then in turn be used in the fabrication of any product. Electricity is the alchemical medium that allows any thing to be turned into any thing else, a medium therefore in which there are no things at all. This is no more dramatically evident than in the electromagnetic radiation emanating from any electrical device, though without designs such as Dunne and Raby's this evidentiality is not evidenced.

Crucial for this argument with M is that the work that these designs do, the revelations they accomplish, can only take place in use. These are not museum pieces, but pieces that only work when lived with. To my mind, then, these are exemplary things that reveal injurious neglect of things through technology. Only by being in our midst and used each day, do they turn us, every so often, to the essence of our situation.

M: C's commitment to agency is really a form of instrumentalism, a version of economic rationalism that justifies itself in terms of a readily measurable mass audience and appropriately calculable outcomes. He is compelled to manipulate a situation to get the most number of people in the shortest time to practice consuming in a certain way. This is absolutely essential in certain functional situations, such as creating a sustainable practice for industrialised societies. However, it is counter- productive to establishing an ethics or an ontology.

One of the definitions of art is that it has no practical use or is functionless. It is the uselessness of art that makes it immune to the instrumentalism of technicity. As Adorno writes,

> By crystallising in itself as something unique to itself, rather than complying with existing social norms and qualifying as 'socially useful' it criticises society by merely existing, for which puritans of all stripes condemn it. (Adorno quoted in Ziarek 2004, 41)

Within the art world, even the instrumentality of contemporary economics ceases to function. Most artists continue to make their work at a loss and finance it by cleaning, teaching,

labouring. There is something of a pre-industrial gift economy at play here. Most governments validate the gift economy by accepting the special nature of art as something that needs to be preserved outside the market economy. They do this by nurturing art through 'gifts' from funding bodies and grant programs. Paradoxically, art also functions as a valuable commodity bought and sold on a global scale. There is a differential dynamic between art, artists, contemporary art, investment art, the art world, and the art market that defies the imperial drive of techno-rationalism.

It is its uselessness that makes art useful.

> Art becomes socially "meaningful" precisely when it breaks with aesthetic and political functions that society establishes for it, when it alters the power formations that regulate society and that the society wants to stamp or project on to art works. Instead, what art inaugurates is a different force work, a different disposition of forces, which means that the relations they produce become disposed into a different mode of revealing and as a result the world unfolds differently . . . The poietic force of art would consist, then, in an alternative, non-violent dispositon of forces, which does not mean that art becomes blind to the "real" world or that it ends up in an escapist, aesthetic limbo, but rather it instantiates the "same and only world otherwise". (Ziarek 2004, 41–42)

C and M: This debate between us is no doubt founded on an unsustainable binary opposition, if not asking the wrong question altogether. M's critique of design targets the least interesting commercial designs and C's critique of art targets the least interesting institutional works of art. If there is a responsive action to technics, it clearly lies in something like artful design or designerly art. The valence of the examples that we both use derive precisely from the interpenetration of art and design; M's artwork with a wayfinding design, and Dunne and Raby's designs with expanded artworks. And, of course, the 'and' in these kinds of 'art and design' should be the same 'and' that lies between earth and world; in other words, an

'and' signalling the belonging together of what is necessarily in strife.

However, this too-easy conclusion should not be considered glib. These couplings are placeholders for some significant questions to which our debate has hopefully drawn attention.

Firstly, there is the issue of *aesthesis*. If Heidegger's historico-materialism is a post-aesthetics that can be exemplified in artful design and designerly art, it is not therefore a non-aesthetics, especially if aesthetics is taken in its original sense, as referring to the meaningful experience of things. If technology annihilates thingliness, then, whether it is art or design, the point is for us to recover an ability to sense things, to make sense of things. *Aesthesis* is therefore at issue, precisely because, due to Heidegger's "Origin of the Work of Art", it is no longer concealed beneath the metaphysical philosophy of aesthetics. The work of Jean-Luc Nancy offers a guide to responding to this question.[6]

Secondly, there is the issue of use. If art's uselessness is nonetheless useful in revealing the technological condition, and if the use of a designed thing does not only lead to the withdrawal of that thing into ready-to-handedness but to the revelation of thingness itself, then we must develop a much more nuanced understanding of use. Heidegger indicated as much toward the end of his lecture series *What Is Called Thinking?* (1968) but it remains only a hint.

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ENDNOTES

1   This phrase is a modification of the title of Mike Hale's book *Living Thinkwork: Where Do Labour Processes Come From?* (London: CSE Books, 1980).

2   This is derived from Jean-Luc Nancy's version of *Gestell*, *ecotechnics*. See, for example, "War, Law, Sovereignty: *Techné*", in *Rethinking Technologies*, ed. Vera Andermatt Conley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

3   A clear Heideggerian explanation of the essential relation between the *techne* of making and the consumerism of the *ersatz* is the chapter on "Work" in Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

4   For a typically thorough exploration of the logic of the secret, see Jacques Derrida's "Passions: 'An Oblique Offering'" in *On the Name*, trans. David Wood (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

5   On Heideggerian 'making history' understood as praticable 'world making' rather than 'world history politics', see Charles Spinosa, Hubert Dreyfus, and Fernando Flores, *Disclosing New Worlds* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997).

6   See Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Muses*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996) and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, trans. Jeffrey Librett (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).