The aim of this text is to explore intersections, specifically the borders between elements; the liminal transitory, in-between state or space that demarcates a shift, a displacement; a space that is characterised by indeterminacy, ambiguity; an interstice for overlapping and displacement of domains of difference. It is to interrogate this 'third space,' a space that is without a tangible presence, in a material sense, but in terms of the hierarchy of any given work, can be reviewed on equal terms. It is telling that I use the word 'interrogate' in that this space in-between might be considered as a 'zone' of interrogation, a space to inhabit that allows us to consider inter-relationships, associations and possible meaning. These readings are subjective; that's to say, in semiotic terms, they are connotative rather than denotative.

The driving force of this exploration is a collaborative project, centred upon pairings and juxtapositions. This project is entitled Subjek, a nonsense word, with no meaning, derived from the word subject.

Within this project the mode of communication is the photographic image, specifically images taken using mobile phone technology. The central premise of the project is derived from the notion of action and response. One collaborative partner would capture and send an image to the other, and that would then elicit a response from the second collaborative partner. The original image and the response would then be presented as a single phrase, or coupling. On occasion, multiple responses were recorded, and in this case a group of images were presented. These couplings, or groups were then framed within a single space, initially a web page. Inevitably within these couplings, or groupings, a boundary separates the elements that go to form the whole, a border that demarcates the transition from one element to another. Through sheer proximity a series of dialogic relationships are established, a passing of influences, back and forth, within which a viewer might engage.

A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognised, the boundary is that from which something begins presencing.

Each pairing, or grouping forms a proposition. The act of calling each grouping a proposition was a deliberate one, and derives its meaning, from the philosophical term that refers to the content or meaning of a meaningful declarative statement, a statement that either affirms or denies. Inherent within the definition of proposition is the dichotomy of true and/or false, and as such retains a certain plurality, which seemed to fit the nature of the project.

Each proposition represents a collapsing of time and space, in that each collaborator, whether the instigator, or the respondent, are separated by location and time.
Each proposition is presented as given and immediate, negating the degrees of separation in terms of time taken and the location in which the image was captured. Each component of any given proposition offers no clues as to the specific time or location that it was recorded. It is this lack of contextual specificity that constitutes the open relationship between the images. This lends the work a certain plurality; it provides multiple readings. To use a premise drawn from Sergei Eisenstein, within each proposition the first component presents the viewer with the thesis, the second the antithesis, and so on and so forth; it is up to the viewer to establish the synthesis; it is up to the viewer to inhabit the intersections between them and form a reading for themselves.

The decision to only use mobile phone technology was made because a degree of immediacy was deemed to be an important aspect of the project. It is a factor of our time that most people carry a mobile phone wherever they go, equipped with camera, this enables them to react to any situation, any environment. Images could be sent regardless of time and location and could equally be responded to in the same way. The technical quality of the image, the configuration of pixels as a carrier of the image, was not important. It was simply the image itself that was a key requisite.

There exists an element of chance in the coming together of each of the propositions, in that there was no prior agreement between either of the collaborators. In addition to this, within each proposition, each image was brought together with the other regardless of aesthetic judgements. Adjustments were not made in terms of composition, form, or palette. To a larger extent the content for each proposition might be deemed as arbitrary. Only the frame about the images, the page upon which each proposition sits, was by design, and the scale of each image was controlled so that there were no shifts in emphasis. Both images were uniform in scale. This was to ensure that its format was consistent throughout the project, and that to a larger degree the frame was not read, only the proposition, which it contained.

Within this discourse I will use selected propositions to interrogate a common factor that they all share; that is the threshold, or border, the zone of interrogation that lies between the pictorial elements. I will seek to demonstrate that each of these ‘in-between’ spaces might be seen as the carrier of meaning, and that these, despite often being overlooked, are integral when it comes to deriving meaning from any given work. It is the connective gap, an interstitial passage that prevents identities at either end of it from settling into polarities.

In order to better understand how the propositions operate on a conceptual level, I will consider them first in terms of Barthes’ levels of signification, taking into account the actual and symbolic. It is important to be able to understand how the elements that go to form the whole are to be read, before further reflecting upon degrees of displacement and condensation that are inherent within the dialogic interrelationships within each work. It is precisely these interrelationships that to and fro about the in-between spaces, the borders between the pictorial elements, that lies at the root of the ‘Subjek’ project, and that is the focus of this discourse. In order to further illustrate the significance of these zones of interrogation, and how in terms of the hierarchy within a given work these spaces are equal to that which lies either side of it, I will be referring to Bhabha’s texts on liminality and difference, thus demonstrating how, through scrutinising notions of difference, it is possible to arrive at a third reading.

I will employ a number of contextual examples in order to facilitate this exploration, and to demonstrate the potential for these in-between spaces to exist in many works, and in a number of guises.

A single image will present us with a range of possible readings, however by bringing further images to bear, a dialogic relationship between these elements is established, a relationship where one, as a viewer, is compelled to engage in the interplay between them. It is the space that this interplay might be derived that I shall be focusing on.
As a Western viewer, when looking at Figure 1, we are culturally obliged to read the sequence from left to right and when we scrutinize the first image, in isolation, (if this is really possible) we will pick up upon the signifiers within the image. It is possible to make a series of statements about the image. Through the lack of focus we see a set of spotlights. The light bleeds into the dark and there is a strong contrast between light and dark within the work. This is the level of communication, what Barthes calls ‘first semiotics.’ Where we simply pick up on the information within the image. Because of a lack of focus and context, there is a lack of specificity – the image does not illustrate a specific object or environment, but rather acts as a referent to various possible objects and situations. This is a shift away from the objective; as a viewer we may bring to the image our own subjective experience of the environment.

There are three ellipses grouped together and we bring to the work our experiences of similar configurations. To refer again to Barthes’ this might be seen as the symbolic level of reading, a second or neo-semiotics, where we will bring to the work symbolic associations. Each of these statements, or observations may take us on a cyclical process of semiosis – a chain reaction of associations, and as a viewer we will attempt to rationalise these associations through attempts at nomination, because of a real need to name, and thus objectify. There is a need within us to anchor a meaning, and an anxiety where we cannot.

As a viewer we will constantly strive to achieve a degree of closure, a fixing of perceived meaning, in an attempt to achieve textual unity or integrity. We will inevitably bring something of ourselves to the work in order to complete the work, so enabling a kind of emancipation for the viewer. This understanding of this level of analysis is not by any means new, however for immediate purposes it is helpful to understand what is at play.

By placing a second image in close proximity to the first, the two become linked to form a whole; a sequence has been formed. As a viewer we might well make the same readings of the second image as we did of the first. But this demands that we view them individually, which is now much more difficult, because we would have to ignore the dialogic interrelationship, the continual flow of influences that pass back and forth between each element, through the connective gap that links the two. We are compelled to consider the whole.

With the addition of the second image, the presence of the first is not multiplied but shared. In some sense the integrity of each individual image has been diluted, has been compromised. Both images have been altered irreversibly; correspondingly the integrity of the duo has been established. Within this example we cannot ignore repetition of the image. One reflects upon itself, about an axis, the axis being the gap, or border between the two.

As a viewer we might be seen to inhabit this zone, this zone of interrogation or space of intervention;
we will engage in the dialogue between the two, considering how one might influence the other. In this instance, when we attempt to make sense of this dialogue there is only a certain distance that we can travel, in terms of our analysis. Because one element is exactly the same as the other, then the degree of displacement between the two is minimal. If displacement can be denoted as transference of emotive responses from one focus to another, then the extent of displacement is small. For Barthes, within signifying systems, displacement and condensation were integral operations, where displacement would differentiate objects of reality and alternates distinct situations, and condensation could be seen to implement similarities and repeats the occurrences of similar situations. Through an act of comparison there is no difference between the two images so our understanding of each is similar. There is no distance between each reading.

Art begins where the moment a creaking of a boot (on a film soundtrack) is accompanied by a different visual shot on the film, thus provoking corresponding associations. – And possible displacements

Sergei Eisenstein's quote illustrates this notion of displacement perfectly. We will read the sound and, through a process of nomination, we will arrive at one set of associations.

We will carry out the same process with the different images that we are seeing, and we will then attempt to rationalise the two. Despite repeated attempts at rationalisation, we are doomed to failure; the two do not come together. A degree of displacement has opened up, and the extent of displacement is measurable – a gap between the two elements exists. Similarly a tension within the whole is established where the two elements pull against each other. They are bound together in the same work, so that those dialogic influences are still acting upon each other.

It can also be said that as a viewer we inhabit the gap between the two elements and partake in the dialogue between the two, in an attempt to unite our readings, and to arrive at a ‘fixed’ understanding.

So if we return to our previous example (Figure 1), then, to reiterate, the degree of displacement is slight, and in a sense the pairing creates a closed system – the dialogue only extends minimally, before it is reflected back upon itself.

If we were to seek to further our analysis of the interrelationship between the two identical images in terms of narrative, or as a sequence of events where one follows the other, then there is no progression. One event replicates the other – the starting point is the same as the end point. Once again, the work remains in a closed cyclical system, where we jump from left to right and right to left about the gap, or border that separates the two.

If we continue this discourse to explore actual propositions emerging from the *Subjek* project, when we bring two differing images together then the interrelationship is extended. For instance if we

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Fig. 2. Images taken from the project 'Subjek' and are author's own. 2010-211
were to look at Figure 2, we could apply the same degrees of analysis.

Once again, we could read each image individually and arrive at an understanding through unities of apperceptions, associations and nomination, but as with our previous example, by bringing the two images together, that dialogic relationship has been established, and thus the integrity of the individual image has been compromised.

Each image has been transformed and goes to serve a greater whole; it is difficult to separate the two. It is when we consider this interrelationship that we can perhaps travel further in terms of our analysis.

Between the two images there is a greater degree of displacement. One image is different to the other. The second image shares none of the attributes of the first, there is a very different set of signifiers, and thus we are taken on a very different path of semiosis. When we attempt to fix meanings from this image we reach very different conclusions than the first. Our attention shifts from one image to the other as we try to rationalise the two readings, to arrive at a third inferred reading. An example of this third reading was explored by Pierre Huyghe's work 'Third Memory' where Huyghe juxtaposed scenes from Sidney Lumet's film 'Dog Day Afternoon' and a video interview where the original protagonist John Woytowicz, upon whom the film was based, relives the real events. Within the work Huyghe utilises a first memory, where Woytowicz relives the real events, and this is juxtaposed with a second memory, where corresponding scenes from the film are shown.

The border between the two elements serves as a liminal space where fiction and reality collide, and where the viewer arrives at a third reading, or 'third memory,' where the documented and imagined are blurred.

To return to the images in Figure 2, the border between the two becomes a zone for us, as a viewer, to inhabit and interrogate the two. It is a space of intervention within the work, and it is a space for us to posit this subjective third reading, a synthesis of both the thesis, and the antithesis. As a viewer we will inhabit the space in between the two images in order to arrive at this subjective reading. This reading might be extended to possible narratives. Where Figure 1 demonstrated no real progression, in a narrative sense, within Figure 2 there is a distinct displacement, inasmuch as there is a difference between the two elements.

We are able to read this difference as a form of progression, it is a sequence after all, and as such,
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through a process of rationalisation of signs and apperceptions we might attempt to impose possible narratives upon the work. This is aided partly by the elements within the second image. The droplet serves as a trace of an event; that event, however subjective, denotes a passing of time, and thus a furthering of action.

Within this individual image on the right there is an inferred narrative, and the image on the left extends this. Once again the border between the two images acts as an in-between state, marking the shift from one possible event within the narrative to the other, and once again we have to engage with this space of intervention, in order to establish the narrative, however subjective.

This intersection, this border between the two images, acts in a similar way as the editor’s cut within a film. By using a filmic cut as a transition from one shot to another, where each shot shares a commonality through related imagery, and where the second shot presents a progression of events from the first, there is a furthering of the narrative.

In sequence we read the action in the first shot, then the second. Once again there is a dialogic relationship established, the flow of influences from the first shot to the second, and back again quickly establishes the narrative.

In terms of a third reading, this, particularly in popular culture film where continuity editing is the norm, is less than ambiguous. The extent of displacement is slight, as in popular film the aim is to make the narrative explicit.

However, if the first shot is very different to the second there is a greater degree of displacement; we take readings from the first, and then the second, and try to rationalise the two, but because of this difference, because of this displacement, the narrative is more elusive; a more subjective third reading opens up, centred upon the editor’s cut. This is precisely at play in montage filmmaking. If we return to Eisenstein, it was his belief that it was possible to manipulate emotional responses within an audience, to create filmic metaphor, through the juxtaposition of two independent shots.

Obviously the cut is not an entity that we can see, but is certainly an element that can be read. In the context of film its presence is fleeting, and yet we are forced to engage with it, to cognitively or interpretively resolve the transition from one shot to another, and to attempt to rationalise the two. If we look to Figure 3, which shows the last still from one shot, and the first still from a second, the shot of the statue immediately follows the shot with the church. The space between the two shots is representative of the editor’s cut. We watch the first shot, and whilst watching the second we are referring to the first, our attention briefly flows from one to the other and back again. (Before progressively repeating the process with ensuing shots) Shot one presents us with one context, shot two another, there are no common denominators; nothing linking the two and the difference between the two is marked.

Fig. 4. ‘October: Ten Days That Shook the World,’ 1928. Sergei Eisenstein
The degree of displacement between the two is also made manifest, and a third reading opens up. It is this third reading that Eisenstein manipulated to elicit emotive responses.

Of course within a film, each shot exists within the context of the narrative as a whole, and so eventually as the film ends the narrative is resolved, as too are our readings of the work. In a sense the multiplicity of shots together seek to establish meaning for individual shots.

Nonetheless the cut, however transitory, can be referred to as a transitional, in-between space, and whether brought to the fore or smoothed over, is an integral border between shots and thus something that can be read.

Aside from the conceptual spaces that are engendered by the borders between elements of work, these in between spaces can be further explored in terms of a physical space of intervention, where the viewer is able to inhabit this liminal space in order to further interrogate the elements that exist on either side.

If we explore the work of American artist Renee Green’s Sites of Genealogy then this operates in exactly this way.

Within this work Green used the architecture of the P.S. 1 exhibition space, where she used three rooms, the boiler room, the stairwell, and the attic.

In the boiler room and the attic room she installed artifacts that referenced African and American cultural influences and allusions – influences that impacted upon her self, where conceptual dichotomies akin to “high/low,” “black/white,” and “good/bad” were established.

I used architecture literally as a reference, using the attic, the boiler room, and the stairwell to make associations between certain binary divisions such as higher and lower and heaven and hell. The stairwell became a liminal space, a pathway between the upper and lower areas, each of which was annotated with plaques referring to blackness and whiteness.

By using artifacts to form polar differences between the boiler room and the attic installations Green establishes displacements in the reading between the two – we, as the viewer, will take a reading from one room, and a different reading from the other; the displacement is established in the differences between the two rooms, and in Green’s case these echo the cultural differences impacting on the self.

The stairwell can be seen as the border between the two, physically linking the two spaces, thus establishing the dialogic interrelationship, apparent within the previous examples, where influences of each space impact on the other, and where differences become blurred. The stairwell is the liminal space, the space in-between the designations of identity and thus becomes space where processes of symbolic interactions occur.
Within this discourse I have focused on that which is often overlooked, a non-image or a non-text, in a literal sense, but a space, an in-between space, a kind of third space. This space holds no meaning on its own, seen in isolation it cannot be read. It is a space that absorbs meaning from that which surrounds it. It is a point of intersection where meanings collide, overlap and blur. Despite its intangible qualities it is as important as the more tangible aspects of any given work. It is a liminal space fraught with uncertainties, ambiguity, and renegotiations. Yet it is a space that denotes the beginning of new meaning, a confluent of influences and the signified, where readings come together and advance into further meaning. If we were to consider the origins for the word ‘liminal,’ it is derived from the Latin ‘limen,’ meaning threshold, thus we are to step over the threshold into subjective and creative operations. It is a symbolic space that we are able to inhabit, where we are able to attempt to unite apperceptions, and to bring something of ourselves to the work. To misappropriate a quote from Barthes, it is, 'an accent, the very form of an emergence, of a fold (even a crease) marking the heavy layer of information and signification.'

This is not a new space; borderlines and zones of transition are inherent in, if not in all works, then certainly many. I have only made a brief survey within this text. Artists (I use this term in its broadest sense) can choose to show these interstitials or hide them. They may inhabit physical space, as with Renee Green’s ‘Sites of Genealogy,’ where she used the stairwell between two sites, or they may be a little more than an interruption, as a cut within Soviet Montage. Some are more symbolic spaces, spaces that cannot be seen, but nonetheless can be engaged with; the Surrealists made full use of these spaces. Andre Breton’s apprehension of Surrealism was as the juxtaposition of two distant realities brought together to create a new uncanny union. This ‘new uncanny union,’ is precisely the third reading alluded to within this discourse.

If we return to the project ‘Subjek,’ the aim was to explore these zones of interrogation and borders; each proposition allows the viewer to engage with the borders between the images, to absorb the referents, and through attempts of rationalisation, arrive at the own reading.

The project is aimed at bring to the fore these spaces, to question their operation. It is hoped that each proposition represents a beginning, a beginning of an endless cycle of interpretation. It does not attempt to present something new, rather to celebrate what is already there.

Notes

2. www.subjek.net – A year-long collaborative project made up of a series of image based propositions. Each proposition represents a daily instance of action and response, where one collaborator would record and send an image, and where the second collaborator would respond by recording and sending a second image. The central premise of the project is for each proposition to propose potential for a third, inferred reading; arrived at by engaging in the multiple images shown. All images are copyright to the artists Shaun Camp and Jon Clark. 2011.
6. It should be noted that in terms of logic, a proposition would denote truth or false as absolutes, and do not present a plurality. However in the context of the project (Subjek) the author denoted a proposition to be both true and false, and therefore contain a degree of plurality. A degree of license has been used.
7. Eisenstein exploited narrative motion, resulting in, setting up expectations and asking questions e.g. the thesis – the antithesis – the synthesis. The first two shots ask the question – ‘What is the connection between these ideas?’ The answer is then established in shot three, the ‘synthesis’ – Barthes, Roland. *The Responsibility of Forms*, Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991, pp. 41-44, 47-48, 51, 54-59.
8. Bhalla, Homi. *The Location of Culture*, London, New York: Routledge, 2004, p. 5. – Within the work ‘Sites of Genealogy’ Renee Green used the stairwell to undermine the installations in the attic, and the boiler room, in order to blur the distinct identities. This serves as a metaphor for self, where she was the product of both cultural influences, not one at any one time.
10. Ibid, p. 53.
11. "Emancipation begins when we challenge the
opposition between viewing and acting …… the spectator also acts, like the pupil or scholar. She observes, selects, compares, and interprets. She links what she sees to a host of other things that she has seen on other stages, in other kinds of place. She composes her own poem with the elements of the poem before her.” – Ranciere, Jacques. *The Emancipated Spectator* / trans. by Gregory Elliott, London: Verso, 2009, p. 13.

12 Barthes' notion of displacement and condensation is derived directly from Freud's analysis of the processes of dream imagery. Lacan in turn equated these respectively with metonym and metaphor.


14 This triad, often attributed to Hegelian (GW F Hegel) thought, was adopted by Eisenstein, in his analysis of montage techniques. This might be seen as signification, a higher order of secondary, neo-semiotics, and might be beyond the message, and more the symbol, and belongs to psychoanalysis, dramaturgy. – Barthes, Roland. *The Responsibility of Forms*, Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991, pp. 41-44, 47-48, 51, 54-59.


17 The film is based a true event where John Woytowicz robbed a bank in Brooklyn, in 1972, to pay for his lover's gender reassignment operation. Subsequently Woytowicz was arrested and sentenced to twenty years in prison.


19 Continuity editing is omnipresent in mainstream film where the aim is to smooth over the inherent discontinuity of the editing process and to establish a logical coherence between shots.


 sintezės konstruktas bei Bretono siurrealistiškas sugreitinimų suvokimas, kurį dalinai įkvėpė Lautréamont aprašytas atsitiktinė siuvinimo mašinos ir skėčio sąveika ant skrodimo stalo. Šiame straipsnyje nėra keliamas tikslas apibrėžti tarpines erdves, jų simbolines sankirtas. Kai kuriais požiūriais „fiksuota“ reikšmė pakenktų konceptualiems procesams, kurių dalis šios erdvės yra. Straipsnio tikslas yra išryškinti šias erdves ir aptarti jų svarbą bet kuriame iš minimų meno kūrinių.

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Parengta spaudai: 2012 09 25