

'The Façade Within': notes for a paper given at *The Dark Precursor* an International Conference on Deleuze and Artistic Research, Ghent, 2015

The painting is finished and it is a static object – this is a fact but still it can't be fully known. Inside perception there is an awareness that anterior to that individuated "object" and the individuated "subject" who is looking there is a process of individuation. What is at stake is to discover, through writing, a thought that is older than I am; let's say it's a thought that belongs to painting.

But *how do we discover this thought that belongs to painting?*

Not 'objectively' by focussing on form, structure, meaning. Writing must find a *relation* to the painting that repeats the life of the work of art according to what writing can do.

With reference to my own work: how this has happened in my painting practice: *you can see that resemblance to this key painting by Juan Usle, La Garganta de Albers, Las Muelas de Gaudi(G/A) is only vague but what was more important was a creative process – an unfolding of (invisible) rhythms not forms.*

1) Autopoeisis (and code-duality):

In seeking to discover the thought that belongs to G/A it is no longer considered to be an object but is now treated as *an open system and a form of life, a process of individuation.*

The process of individuation is similar to the idea of autopoiesis. According to Maturana and Varela what distinguishes the living from the non-living is 'self-production' and their whole enterprise was to understand this process from the point of view of the organism and not from the outside.

- they reject the Darwinian assumption that the environment is given and the same for all organisms. For the autopoietic entity (from the inside) the environment is species specific.
- This environment or *umwelt* is a receptivity genetically conditioned but also interpretative. From the inside there is a response to a stimuli. A stimulus is only a stimulus when it is important to the recipient. It can only be important because of its internal structure which is determined by what has been encoded – a material structure that accommodates, looks out for what it needs. Why would painting look out for G and A?

2) How do Albers and Gaudi become signs for G/A?

“Albers” must become information. This is what words can do – through words we can enter a world that we cannot see.

“Albers” is a name – a painter whose formative years were spent at the Bauhaus and a body of work that is part of Modernist art histories. There is a painting that looks like the motif depicted in G/A and it recognisably belongs to Albers' *Homage to the Square* series of paintings which he began in 1950 at the age of 62 and continued throughout the final twenty six years of his life.

But *this* is not the information which made a difference to G/A – that is to say, you don't need to hear facts about the man and his work. Information is the emergence of significance in the individuating being: it does not pre-exist individuation which is a process *that undoes dualities* (just as the autopoietic organism responds to environmental signs or difference – ref to D&G tick example)

So, if from the *outside* the Albers motif could be identified as an ironic sign for post-modernism, the creation of an autopoietic entity would suggest the creation of an *inside* through which this image is overcome; a cliché emptied of all its certainty. In other words, as a component on the inside it has a reality of its own that is not the same as it would have on the outside. For this transformation to happen it is as if Albers' painting ceased to become an identifiable form (e.g. as an interchangeable sign of Modernism) in order to become 'information'.

Within Simondon's philosophy of individuation '...Information displaces form. Information reveals itself through the “emergence of signification”...' [David Scott, 2014, p40].

Furthermore, *the lesson of autopoiesis* tells us that Albers' painting (as an environmental factor, a 'sign' to which G/A responds) becomes 'information' only because of G/A's in-built receptivity. This receptivity is both determined by a past evolution, genetically encoded - a series of evolutionary moments; a history of painting - and simultaneously and paradoxically is the opportunity for that past to be re-figured by what it receives.

Let us imagine Usle painting: for him this painting by Albers is both *outside* the activity of painting as a visible material object (an object that Usle can see) and *inside* the activity of painting as part of the givens, the understanding, the language and tradition of painting which are implicit in Usle's practice.

But the real question is how we might understand this from the perspective of G/A, i.e. not from the artist's or viewer's point of view?

What does G/A respond to, if not to the image?

To answer this we must remember that Albers is also an autopoietic entity that emits signs that are information for G/A. As information, it is as if the 'Albers painting' is split in two. On the one hand G/A repeats it as an object of perception whose image can be identified; a painting that can be remembered, described and written about. On the other hand, as its significance emerges (through a juxtaposition with other components), something of Albers own virtual organisation returns in the creation of a new organisation.

...Proust sees memory as the quite possibly infinite reservoir of what was never actually experienced, so to speak, but which returns all the same: a sort of *unlived* experience, if you like, which Proust is going to make the very matter of literature. (de Beistegui, 2013: 28)

This idea of 'unlived' experience, to which de Beistegui refers, is crucial because although it refers to the past it is not the past that was once experienced and now forgotten, but the memory of what remains to be lived and what's still to come in any lived experience. This suggests the possibility that with every perception or lived experience there is an accompanying unconscious 'unlived' experience; a time that doubles that which we are aware of.

...Proust's most radical discovery: the fact that time is always divided in two, into present and past, just as life's always divided into lived and unlived experience. And it's the latter, this unlived experience that's the concern of literature. (de Beistegui, 2013: 45)

This implies that Albers' painting becomes information for G/A, not as image or form (the memory of perception of an identity in the present) but as a memory of what has no form or identity. This memory of what was never lived is what was left when a perception was cut from a plenitude of sensations but which remained awaiting action and, in this sense, is a memory of the past, of feelings. In the temporal paradox of sensation, the unlived returns, not through a conscious act of remembering but through the irruption of involuntary memory. This is not to fictionalise the event of involuntary memory as that which was experienced by artist, viewer or painting but it is to give it a place in writing; to acknowledge the role of involuntary memory as a principle of an encounter with the work as sensation not as image.

If information is the emergence of significance in the individuating being, what can we learn of the nature of that information through what emerges as significance in G/A?

We are at the limit of description but...

- 1) The Albers motif *operates as a pseudo centre (evoking but not engaging with the structure of figurative composition, and its compositional hierarchy)* whose role is not so much to be seen but to displace vision and move the work of the painting along; much like the role played by the goal of the game which sets the game in motion and sustains play but has no real value in itself.
- 2) Albers motif *operates metonymically by association with Modernism*. Albers is a *part* of that history of painting/culture which is brought into Usle's painting through a relationship of contiguity, by association; its image associates with utopian ideals; the essentialism and historicism of Modernism and in particular the pleasure of eyesight. The motif introduces the specificity of Albers' experimentations metonymically (i.e. by concentrating all of the other paintings in the *Homage to the Square* series into this part) and actually; as a formal arrangement of those experimentations: the rhythm of colours as they interact with one another across the surface, the weight of colours and their chromatic interval. The Albers motif sits in a position that mimics the central square of Albers' own painting (reversing the gravitational weight) embedded into the Gaudi component which draws out its specific chromatic and compositional musicality. Like a keynote the 'throat of Albers' generates tempo, tone, rhythm and interval to create the voice of the work which vibrates through the 'teeth of Gaudi'. The sense of contraction and expansion, made sensible by the quantity/quality colour relations of the Albers square, extends across the intense red surface through the positive and negative shapes made by white paint scumbled on top.

In summary:

The first significance to emerge from a receptivity to "Albers" is the evocation of the grammar of figuration through the pseudo centre (which is the image of an Albers painting).

And the second significance to emerge is an expressivity or chromatic rhythm that is generated by that image but which is not immediately obvious in Albers pseudo-scientific explorations.

Let's say that these significances express Albers as information or what was never lived. The process of individuation undoes the duality of the lived and the unlived but the mechanism that underpins that is the undoing of a deeper duality; a duality that is the unlived and from which the lived is actualised.

What are the terms of such a duality?

This is not possible to answer if we fall into the trap of causality. The significance that I have described cannot be said to have been caused by Albers the 'unlived' for it is, in fact,

generated by the virtual organisation of G/A which connects Albers with Gaudi as components in the autopoietic machine.

Where does such a connection lie in these very different practices of painting and architecture?

If not through resemblance then in the terms of the differential relations which generate their forms. In other words by connecting their difference.

Let us suppose that these two diverse practices share something to do with the façade; for it was a momentary spark of resemblance between the painting and the façade of a Gaudi building that began my enquiry.

Let us suppose that in painting, the picture plane is generated by a differential relation between a façade of depiction (absolute artifice), on the one hand, and the surface of expression (absolute truth) on the other. In Old Master painting the surface of expression is hidden behind the surface of depiction – a façade that mimics the objective world. The evolution of abstract painting demonstrates an increasing emphasis on the material stuff of paint as expressivity or the subjective world became located on the surface of the painting.

It is as if (perversely, perhaps) the exclusion of artifice in Albers' almost scientific explorations and the extreme opticality of his paintings became a sign for G/A; for an abstract painting that would be different from Albers in its acknowledgement of the body, its tactility and an ad hoc, improvised facture of the painted surface but which wants to repeat, to amplify the expressivity of its rhythm and colour.

It may be reasonable to expect painting to become a sign for another painting, but **how does the architecture of Gaudi become information for G/A?**

There is a spark of resemblance between the façade of G/A and the façade of a building designed by Gaudi. The painting brings architecture into painting, so to speak. Albers invited Gaudi in (– a reminiscence of a past function, a repetition of a past intimacy between painting and architecture??)

Hubert Damisch has argued that Modernist architecture turned buildings inside out, and diminished the importance of the façade, claiming that Modernism's orientation towards the architectural plan replaced the facade of Baroque architecture as a sign of value. Thus, we can think of a building's actual façade as *generated* by a relation between the differential terms "vertical, fictive façade" and "horizontal, literal plan".

Although Gaudi was a modernist architect his buildings do not conform to the mainstream Modernist pre-occupation with the plan – indeed his buildings were generated through models not plans. It is this counter stream that Albers secretly desires; for Albers the façade of artifice, of fiction, had been reduced to zero in terms of conscious perception and yet we

have seen that when unfolded in G/A the rhythms of colour and interval exceed their geometric boundary; an unfolding of what persists virtually; an un-lived past accompanying conscious perception in the present.

3) Why is Metaphor not an operation of Resemblance?

(The 'un-lived' returns & the need for the figure of the arche-metaphor)

And so the irruption of involuntary memory brings together two sets of oppositions whose terms are different but which share the same relation of difference; a relation between the poles of artifice/decoration on the outside and truth/expressivity on the inside. In painting the façade of depiction or narrative of objective truth vs surface of expression or narrative of subjective truth resonates with architecture's differential relation of external fictive façade vs internal plan. This is not a connection of resemblance, of course.

That spark of resemblance between the façade of a building by Gaudi and the picture plane that is G/A is not a sign that the architectural façade is a metaphor for G/A. On one level that is the case (as I have suggested) but this is momentary. Just as Orpheus in his search for Eurydice turns around to encounter, not Eurydice as substantial and corporeal but only her presence *as a disappearance, an absence* ... our gaze remains fascinated by a surface which is impossible to grasp.

This 'façade' is not a metaphor in the usual sense of the word but it is the *creation of a new figure*. This new figure resolves an opposition between what could be described as the metonymic operation of Albers and the metaphor of Gaudi: following Derrida we could say that this is the figure of the arche-metaphor for just as arche writing precedes the separation of speech and writing the arche metaphor precedes the separation of metaphor and metonymy; its temporality precedes the diachrony of metonymy and the synchrony of metaphor??

1) From the arche-metaphor to the 'fractured I'

This figure of the (arche) metaphor of the façade is a return to abstract painting of the façade; the façade that became invisible as the surface of expression, of truth, became the defining characteristic of Modernist abstraction – even for those painters like Albers whose subjectivity was expressed through the aesthetic delight of the geometric surface. The opposition between depiction and expression is resolved. For this is not the depiction of any façade that was experienced in the past. Whereas voluntary memory includes the perspective of the subject i.e. it is situated in relation to the subject who remembers, this façade returns involuntarily as the return of the "un-lived". Without the effort of will what

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returns is that which was of no interest to perception in the past but remains as a pure past accompanying every present. At the moment of return the past and the present are synthesised to cancel out temporal distance.

The time that separates them is annulled and they are carried onto another level, another temporality. They converge in a sort of instantaneousness that runs parallel to the flow of time, a sort of "time outside time" that is at the same time the very essence of time, what Proust calls "time in its pure state". (de Beistegui, 2013:56)

As an (arche)metaphor the facade is encountered in its essence. This essence is an unconscious Idea that cannot be experienced as such; it is not a subjective act of representation but an involuntary irruption. This is not a universal essence but in principle it is specific to the encounter with the material object, created in a moment of temporal synthesis. This is the moment when we find ourselves inside the work; when the unity and continuity of self in time can no longer be assured; a unity that would situate us outside the work and that would separate us from the work as subject and object. It is this sense of caesura what past is separated from future, in the moment that empirical unification fails, the moment of the scattered Orpheus, that is the emptiness of the façade; but a caesura and an emptiness from which a new perspective on the past is created.

Perhaps that spark of resemblance between the façade and the picture plane is a resemblance between the series which the 'dark precursor' causes to communicate. Can we call the "façade in its essence", the pure and empty form of the façade, that dark precursor? i.e. an identity that belongs to the precursor but which is 'perfectly indeterminate' (D&R, p119)?

Because, as Deleuze says:

...[the precursor] has no place other than that from which it is 'missing', no identity other than that which it lacks; it is precisely the object = x, the one which 'is lacking in its place' as it lacks its own identity'.

Difference and Repetition, (p120)