



Maikäfer flieg.



Ladybird, ladybird,
fly away.

fig.1 Vera Frenkel, "Storage Spaces" (Salt Mines, Alt Aussee, Austria), in *Body Missing*, Website, 1994-ongoing. http://www.yorku.ca/bodymissing/history/salt_mines.html

“A BETTER PLACE”

Bureaucratic Poetics in Vera Frenkel's *Body Missing* and *The Institute*

He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging.... He must not be afraid to return again and again to the same matter; to scatter it as one scatters earth, to turn it over as one turns over soil. For the matter itself is only a deposit, a stratum, which yields only to the most meticulous examination what constitutes the real treasure hidden within the earth: the images, severed from all earlier associations, that stand – like precious fragments or torsos in a collector's gallery – in the prosaic rooms of our later understanding.¹

As we click through the hotlinks of Vera Frenkel's websites, *Body Missing* (1994-ongoing) and *The Institute*TM: *Or, What We Do for Love* (2003-ongoing), again and again we end up at places we have been before, like lost travellers walking in circles.² Of course, we belong to that group of world-weary travellers who are capable of self-recognition: we know all about recurrence as an eruption of the Freudian uncanny, as a revelation and misrepresentation of repressed traumatic psychic events. We also know that any self-recognition must be misrecognition. In the absence of an actual navigation of Frenkel's websites, however, all that someone writing about them can offer is a series of elliptical allusions to those circles within circles. Immediately upon entering *The Institute* we are told that this will be “an investigation in the shape of a fugue.” Any bearings we might hope to take from the highly structured musical fugue are subsequently flummoxed as we are presented with alternative dictionary definitions: a “fugue” can mean a pathological mental state in which a “loss of awareness of one's identity is often coupled with flight from one's usual environment.” In Frenkel's websites we are meant to be disoriented.

The *Body Missing* deals with a catastrophic disorientation and displacement: the *Kunstraub*, the Nazis' unprecedented theft of hundreds of thousands of works of art before and during the Second World War. The complexities of navigating the website, with its elaborate virtual layers of different spaces and disruptive hotlinks, shadow the elaborate and repetitive procedures and the reams of papers associated with the administration of the theft; this in turn evokes the Holocaust. The displacements and losses in both *Kunstraub* and the Holocaust involved a massive machinery of theft, forced labour and transportation, and attendant bureaucracies.

Within *Body Missing*, the page of two of the contributors to the project, Betty Spackman and Anja Westerfrölke, especially frames the issues that will play through *The Institute*. They begin with the image of a spade and a kind of anxiety dream of digging in a garden for a secretly buried gun and ammunition:

But recently when I returned to dig it up, it wasn't there. I tried again, a little further to the left, but I still couldn't find it. Then it occurred to me that I had been watched. Someone had seen me! I became very nervous. I tried again, this time further back and to the right. It was not there either. Perhaps I don't have the right place, I thought. Perhaps the garden has changed so much I don't recognize the exact location. No, I'm sure I remember. It was right there. I must keep digging.³

This passage pays homage to one of the iconic victims of the Nazi regime, Walter Benjamin, who called for a constant and vigilant excavation of remembrance that would take the form of a “fruitless searching,” which he recognized was as important as “succeeding.” Benjamin enjoined us to take up our spade in “ever-new places” and beyond that, to “delve ever-deeper” in old familiar places. In *The Institute* Frenkel turns the frantic virtual digging in *Body Missing* away from the service of a traumatically misremembered past to the service of an expediently overlooked present.

The *Body Missing* website is collaborative, with contributions from a number of artists and writers. As viewers of the website, we too become collaborators in the project, “regulars” of a fictional “Transit Bar,” assuming fluid and possibly shady identities. Frenkel’s *Transit Bar* began as the installation at the *documenta IX* exhibition in Kassel, Germany, in 1992, and was subsequently installed at the Power Plant in Toronto and at the National Gallery of Canada. In its various venues, we – the spectator – entered and had a drink in what seemed to be a real bar, with a bartender (often Frenkel herself), and a piano player. In an ordinary bar we expect to see a sports TV; in the *Transit Bar*, we see videos of various people’s accounts of displacement. Also available are newspapers from the various cities where the video was presented (Kassel, Halifax, Toronto, Ottawa and Stockholm). Alongside there is a *Transit Bar* tabloid, which includes accounts and memories, ranging from the experience of immigration to Canada to deportation to Auschwitz. Gradually, we realize that we are both in the museum and in a bar somewhere during the Second World War, reminiscent of the movie version of *Casablanca*, where visas, identities, and stolen valuables are sought-after, dangerous commodities. In the bar, we join the representations of real and fictive displaced people, artists, writers, spies and black marketers, occupying a time and space in which our participation and knowledge could influence (and, more worryingly, may already have influenced) the course of events; and “collaborator” has an anxiously double meaning. A quotation from the policy of Jörg Haider’s Austrian Freedom party in Spackman and

Westerfrölke's site is a jolting reminder that Nazi cultural policy shades into the contemporary fashion for "retro," nation-based cultures:

Contrary to how it is generally understood, the community of people is not a given, but must rather be produced. "Blood ties" must first be culturally acquired, before they can become organic, natural bonds. The community must therefore be realized primarily on a level of culture, as a cultural community. Traditional nationality, which can only exist in traditional national customs, turns the sideline of "culture" into an essential "location and mission" of the politics of community.⁴

Nation-based culture leads us out of *Body Missing* into its blandly uncanny double: the Canadian arts "institute," which houses elderly, or at least superannuated, artists.

To move from *Body Missing* to *The Institute* may seem bathetic, but there are strange mutual inflections as the epic bureaucracies of cultural Nazism wash against their contemporary, atrophied, weakly volitional form in Canadian nationalized arts administration. State bureaucracy is of course still crucial to our compromised western democracies, seemingly at the service of a number of vaguely dissimulated ideological positions all of which camouflage their respective insincerities. The only firm reference is a vanishing point, not on the horizon of ethical possibilities, but on the "bottom line." In Frenkel's reverse apotheosis, Nazi bureaucratic excess is punished by being resituated in humiliatingly reduced circumstances.

In *Body Missing* the Linz Führermuseum inevitably encompasses the other buildings and spaces, real and imagined, past and present, nested within the heterotopic website. These spaces include the "Transit Bar," the Linz Offenes Kulturhaus (housed in a former Wehrmacht prison), the dismantled and buried Reichschancellery, Hitler's bunker, the secret tunnels and hiding places, the salt mines at Alt Aussee, the planned but unbuilt Linz *Führermuseum*, and, implicitly, the concentration camp. In *The Institute* Frenkel again addresses the museum and social policy, broadly proposing that no corporate or government institution or policy statement or spending cut (or museum or website) can be innocent. There is a kind of bureaucratic original sin.

Frenkel's websites might be thought to be in the tradition of the magnificently and enigmatically illustrated Renaissance allegory, the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*.⁵ It is an account of a dreamer's journey punctuated by strange encounters and mythic incidents in elaborately symbolic buildings and gardens, where monuments, statues, ruins, riddles and hieroglyphs all require endless deciphering.⁶ The layered architectural conceits of allegory may be plotted from the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* through utopian eighteenth and nineteenth-century visions of an ideal geometrical city, embodying a perfected social order such as Charles Fourier's harmonious phalansteries,⁷ through Baron Hausmann's plans

for the massive reconfiguration of Paris, to Hitler's architect Albert Speer's proposals for Berlin and the Linz *Führermuseum*. Those imagined architectures lead to the architectural warrens of *Body Missing* and *The Institute*. That "hypnerotomachia" means "the struggle for love in a dream"⁸ and *The Institute* is subtitled "or what we do for love" enhance the affinity of the Renaissance allegory to Frenkel's websites.

Body Missing and *The Institute* include diagrams and layouts of imagined spaces and ambiguous architectural photographs. The websites tap into the dream of non-Euclidean spaces that have underpinned the architectural visions of modernism from the constructivist romance of the "fourth dimension" through Archigram's dystopian inversions. If the "heterotopia," as a site standing for all other sites, embodies a quest for some lost original monument or architecture such as the Ark, the Tower of Babel, or Solomon's Temple, then *Body Missing* stands for the Linz *Führermuseum* whose "storage spaces" are embedded within the website and ghosted by famous images of Buchenwald (fig.1). In *The Institute*, the bitterly ironic nesting of the concentration camp and the museum mutates into the hospital as arts institute and as nursing home. As allegories, both websites rely on the scaffoldings of imagined governmental and bureaucratic operations and structures.

Hannah Arendt proposed the onion as a metaphor for the spatial configuration of the social order of the totalitarian state. Successive layers of operational bureaucracy communicate information, which while pretending to declare the aims of the system, actually distort and refract both the hollowness and the evil of the dictator at its core.⁹ Kafka's *Trial* offers a comparable conception of state bureaucracy, which Slavoj Žižek theorized as the deployment of an "immense machinery of totally useless, superfluous knowledge, running blindly and provoking [in us] an unbearable feeling of irrational guilt" for acts we know we did not commit.¹⁰ Bureaucracy, then, is both Freudian Superego as punishing father and Lacanian unconscious as a reservoir of fragments of cruel and capricious laws, prohibitions, and injunctions, housing the immoral god, just as Arendt's onion houses the dictator.¹¹ Žižek points out that, as all-knowing agency, bureaucracy may be materialized as paranoia, finding plots in the surrounding symbolic network of meanings.¹²

Of course, any work of fiction is itself aptly allegorized by such a system, as Kafka demonstrates. There is a tradition of setting out the novel itself as a reflexive feat of over-interpretation; and nowhere, with more historical influence, than in Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* and in the novels (now rarely read) of the German Romantic Jean-Paul Richter. These texts established a model of digressive writing in ironical bad faith, full of miscues and feints. Frenkel situates herself as a narrator in that tradition. With particular relevance to the matter of administration, the narrator of Richter's *Titan* is a court official at the

centre of a ring of spies; he must constantly decode the volumes of material sent to him and then make ciphers of his own material. This endless encoding and decoding mocks the novelist's endeavour: the master-spy narrator must try to spin a web of mystery and a sequential narrative at the same time. Richter's narrator laments that just writing and deciphering reports would occupy all his time and that the resulting volume would be so large that it could not be read by men nor pulled by horses. This enterprise, in which the author must write and document that writing simultaneously, presents a model of the bureaucratic report as a self-reflexive work of art. At the core of Richter's novel is the facetious recognition that his text as a 'history' is a paradox: it cannot betray real persons, it cannot accurately portray false ones and, in fact, can depict no one at all. The spymaster, the bureaucrat and the novelist mirror and undo one another. In the tradition of this predicament, Frenkel's work has always recognized "plot" as both narrative and conspiracy. In fact, we learn that one inhabitant of *The Institute* is working on a libretto for an opera of Kafka's *The Trial*.¹³

The categories and accumulations of loss within *Body Missing* take the form of lists, which like all lists, are potentially incantory and possibly expiatory. Frenkel's "master list," the "list of lists," intends to be a set that includes all other sets but which is, therefore, paradoxically, incomplete. It opens out precisely into what it cannot contain: "what was collected, what was stolen...what was hidden, what can only be shown privately, what is heirless, what is still in dispute in the courts, what was unsuccessfully claimed, what is still missing...." This recalls Bertrand Russell's mathematical-logical paradox: could the "set of all sets which are not members of themselves" be a member of itself? If not, the set of all sets is orphaned; the metacategory is itself at a loss. Of course, this is a bureaucratic as well as mathematical philosophical problem. In 1966, the quintessentially Canadian comedian Max Ferguson reported that there was a Department of Forms and Procedures in the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, in which one "little guy" spent his time designing an order form for ordering forms.¹⁴

As a bridge between *Body Missing* and *The Institute*, it is useful to consider the theorized features of a bureaucracy, within and without its fictional allegorization. There is, for a start, the figure of the ideal, dehumanized, purely objective bureaucrat, with his "little tools of knowledge" made up of "images, graphs, lists, questionnaires, dossiers, tables and reports,"¹⁵ on whom the authority of the institution depends. In industries associated with the mass production of standardized units, such objective, systematic, protocols are enmeshed with the ethos of modernism as *Taylorism*.¹⁶ The bureaucratic and Taylorized features of modernism have of course been implicated in the functioning of National Socialism. Zbigniew Libera's scathing "LEGO" concentration camp was constructed entirely from *existing* LEGO kits intended for the construction of

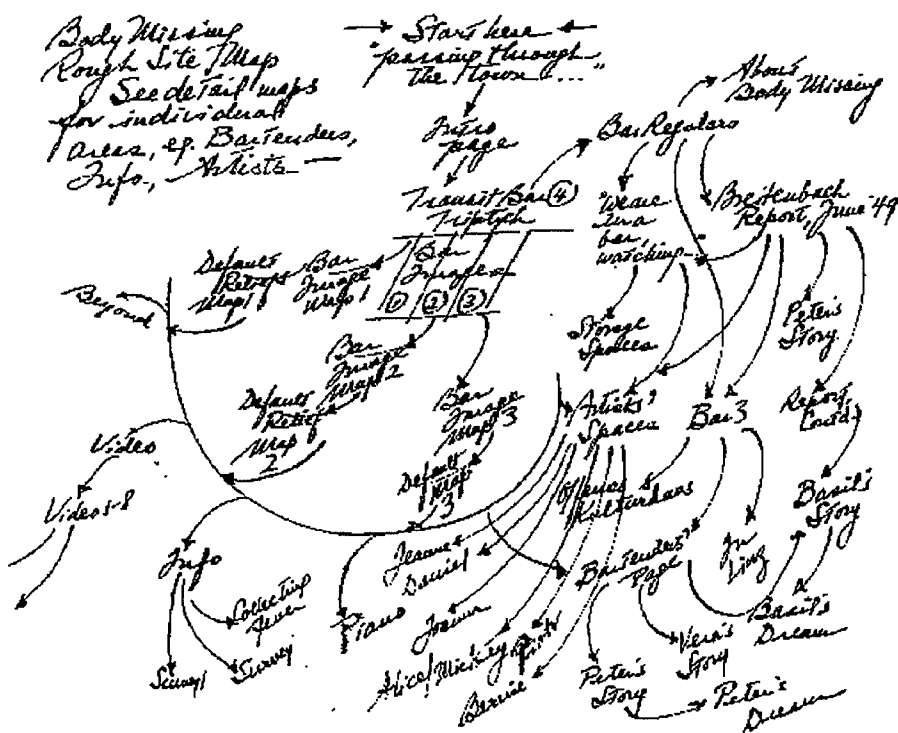


fig.2 Vera Frenkel, "Site Map," in *Body Missing*, Website, 1994-ongoing.
http://www.yorku.ca/BodyMissing/barspace/site_map.html

a range of paracosms, such as the imagined worlds of pirates, knights, Star Wars, Harry Potter and so on, and brings together these associations of modernist mass production and mass destruction.¹⁷

Shortly after the Second World War, the Austrian novelist Heimito von Doderer wrote a lyrical novel about a bureaucrat, *Die erleuchteten Fenster* (1951), in which it is proposed that a bureaucratic protocol with its supposedly "independent and autonomous existence," is "just like a work of art."¹⁸ Certain conceptual art has always capitalized on the rhetoric of impersonal procedure to counter the persistence of the idea of subjective creativity and genius.¹⁹ Its anti-bravado techniques rely on the deployment of seemingly arbitrary systems, statistics, and the lexemes and number sets associated with filing. Such "bureaucratic poetics," also operate in Frenkel's websites. Consider the site map of *Body Missing* (fig.2): Frenkel's handwriting evokes the once standard, now archaic, fine clerical copperplate handwriting, which supported the rhetoric of neutral

fact, tabulation, precision, and authority.²⁰ Its legibility personified the bureaucratic suppression of character, where the only virtuosity lay in the degree of one's neutral compliance to the standard model. As narrator of *Body Missing* and *The Institute*, Frenkel also borrows elements of the functions of the bureaucrat as a tabulator whose authority is enhanced by the objective, quasi scientific, "persona of the observer."²¹ Frenkel too deploys the rhetoric of fact for she wryly assures us in *Body Missing* that everything she tells us is "true." *Body Missing* is littered with virtual documents: Hitler's personal will, archival photographs, floor plans, and extracts from typewritten official military reports are interspersed amongst artists' narratives and images, raising the question as to what might constitute the factual, authoritative, reliable version of things.

Von Doderer's fictional bureaucrat Julius Zihal hilariously conducts his private life according to the procedures and language of the official "Handbook of Administrative Practices" of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, assigning categories and numbers to non-quantifiable criteria. Indeed, the handbook is Zihal's lifeblood. He finds himself reinvigorated by the discovery that a subsection of the regulations is exactly applicable to his case: "He felt himself summarized and substantiated in the most exacting way."²² Von Doderer lards his novel with subsections taken directly from the handbook, and he plays this dense and achingly opaque prose against his own poetic, simile-filled, narration. It becomes clear that the bureaucrats who wrote the handbook envisioned a text that could anticipate and regulate every conceivable contingency that might ever arise. These official excerpts reveal the lurking sublimity of their ultimate task: the imagining of a bureaucratic code that would exist in a one-to-one relationship with all potential events in the world and history. This undertaking recalls the predicament of the narrator of Jean-Paul Richter's *Titan*, snarled in his comprehensive reports. Frenkel mitigates this writing of narrative as bureaucratic report. As a storyteller, she has always recognized the importance of narrative threads that cannot be tied up but that simply fray. To return to Walter Benjamin's terms, evoked in the "Garden" section of *Body Missing*, "remembrance must not proceed in the manner of a narrative or still less that of a report," but "in the strictest epic and rhapsodic manner," it must proceed episodically; or to use Benjamin's metaphor, digging here and there, again and again.²³ It is as allusive decontextualized fragments that bureaucratic reports assume their poetic strangeness.

Frenkel's *Body Missing* is also a parodic repository of bureaucratic procedure and prose conceived as an all-permeating, randomly erupting, gratuitous mechanism of information-gathering, and as paranoid spectre. We learn, for example, that each stolen work of art transported by the Nazis had a numeric code consisting of an acquisition number, inventory number, insurance number, source of sale number, and numbers representing country, region, district, city, public

museum and private collection. These numbers could tell us everything about the history of a work – except that the key to the codes has been lost and the numbers now have no function. This neatly turns the thoroughness of the filing system inside out and strangely anticipates another icon of systems technology, the bar code.²⁴

“Statistics” as carried out by state bureaucracies was a German invention allied to Enlightenment communitarian concerns and making government operations quantifiable, legible, and accountable.²⁵ One inadvertent effect of statistics, however, is a tendency to interpret anomaly as abnormality, and individuality as malfunction. Statistics lend themselves to use as a “moral” tool and instrument of persecution. That is, the bureaucracy of record keeping has a dangerously predictive or prescriptive, as well as a recording function. We record what we are looking for and information may be graphed to project inevitability.²⁶ Through its gathering of censuses and statistics, the Nazi bureaucracy was able to project its own paranoiacally projected double, the “worldwide Jewish conspiracy” hidden behind different national identities.²⁷

Spackman and Westerfrölke’s pages in *Body Missing* contain a telling meditation on the banality of the bureaucratic “phraseology of death” preserved in the “orders, statistics, timetables...daily logs, letters, reports of compliance etc.” of the administration of the Holocaust.²⁸ The apparatuses of murder and death are concealed within a normalizing bureaucratic jargon: “accumulated totals, appeasement, being emigrated, child deportation, cleansing, disinfection, disinfestations, GV (meaning gassing vehicle), J-A actions, J-shipments, Jew clearance, pacification, processing, round-ups, special accommodation, special passenger rail traffic, ST (meaning special treatment)...”²⁹

This lead us to Frenkel’s recent project, *The Institute*, as the apotheosis of Canada’s nationalized vision of the arts. At the same time it represents the reduction of the academy into a euphemized and bureaucratized “care facility” through the process of governmental attrition. This vision is in keeping with the Canadian tradition of an empowered civil service, in which any conspicuously wielded political power must be displaced into administration. In his defining essay on Canadian identity, *Lament for a Nation*, George Grant argued that the civil service was an “essential instrument by which nationhood is preserved.”³⁰ In contradistinction to the United States, Canada’s own historical formation owed a great deal to pragmatic accommodation rather than to nationalistic ideals.³¹ As a kind of remediation for this unromantic administrative history, in 1957 the Canada Council was established to provide state funding of the arts; in the words of Brooke Claxton, the first Director of the Canada Council, it was directed toward promoting the national “unity of Canada.”³² Interestingly, given Frenkel’s conflation of hospitals and cultural policy, Brooke Claxton had also been a federal minister of Health and Welfare.

One probable prototype for *The Institute* is the Banff Centre for the Arts, where Frenkel has been an artist-in-residence and where she worked on *The Institute*. There is logic to *The Institute* being conceived as a variant virtual version of the Banff Centre for the Arts. Banff's geographic location embodies the nationalist mythology of Canada's unification by the railways. Its very name resonates with the Scottish origins of senior officials of the Canadian Pacific Railway and with a sentimental imperial history of Canada.³³ A favourite of picture postcards, set against the backdrop of foothills and wilderness, Banff was originally a tourist destination because of its hot springs; now it is, appropriately for Frenkel's purposes, an art centre with historical associations with hostel and hospital. The Banff Centre equally embodies matters of contemporary Canadianism. It contains, as well as its Centre for the Arts, a Banff Centre for Management, which has hosted conferences dealing with issues that recur in discussions of Canadian identity – water policy, forest and national parks management, and, crucially, nationalized medical care. As a federally sponsored chain of "centres," Frenkel's *Institute* is set out as a typically Canadian spatial order, recapitulating the dispersed regionalist model of Canadian nationalism.

Fictively located in a former hospital, *The Institute* represents, amongst other things, the contemporary anodyne institutionalization of the nationally (un)funded artist. Here, the *Transit Bar* artists' role as covert operatives in *Body Missing* is neutralized. The e-mail greeting card section of *The Institute* offers a "wish you were here" card that features a generic scenic field, which may equally imply greener pastures or being put out to pasture. Frenkel also inverts the avant-garde traditions of artists' collectives, especially in a Canadian context: *The Institute* is the collapse of the collective communitarian ideals of many artist-run centres supported by government grants in the heyday of the 1970s.³⁴ The Canadian artists' collective General Idea had operated, in part, as a parody of the roles available to the Canadian artist. In his essay, "The Humiliation of the Bureaucrat," AA Bronson wryly described General Idea's strategy to embody the "reticent" collective Canadian consciousness in order to fulfill the "national destiny" (shades of Brooke Claxton). This would generate "a Canadian story" with "elaborately Canadian characters dreaming the Canadian dream of one community, that is, a network of communities, sea to sea," calling upon the national attributes of "bureaucratic tendency" and "protestant work ethic" in order to structure "artist-run" galleries, video, and magazines. That bureaucratic mustering, Bronson writes, "allowed us to allow ourselves to see ourselves as an art scene. And we did."³⁵ Frenkel carries this 1970s' "network of communities" into its euphemized "golden years."

The Institute also epitomizes the urban transformation cycle in which disused industrial warehouse spaces become artists' lofts, then galleries, then lofts and condominiums that the artists cannot afford. Art is a gentrifying dung beetle.

Hamilton, Ontario, the supposed site of *The Institute*, is a steel town trying to weather the shift from heavy manufacture to the post-Fordist economy, and attempting to enhance its “profile” as an “arts destination.” As elsewhere, but on a minor scale, its arts institutions function as a kind of front, laundering real and traumatic economic and social disruption.³⁶

If Frenkel’s *Institute* existed, what administrative form would it take and to what stresses would it be prone? We might return to the ideal communities envisioned in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, such as Fourier’s phalansteries, in which each individual finds fulfillment through work and sexual congress. In *The Institute* these should be refracted, in the Canadian manner, through the less idealistic lens of management studies. *The Institute* displays the complexities and hybridization of all professional bureaucracies, tapping into what we might think of as a managerial romance: the notion of the centralized, cross-fertilizing, on-site, on tap, ferment of intellectuals in one space.³⁷ It fits the category of “combination bureaucracy/adhocracy” in which the professional has “the best of both worlds;” she is attached to an organization yet free to function in her own way, and potentially evades all the “pressures and politics” that peer interaction entails. But, of course, as everyone in any institution knows, peer interaction is necessary since we know that some peer, somewhere, is up to something with negative implications for us, for our funding, for our status. In *The Institute*, the horrifying implications of gossip, spying and concealment that wove through *Body Missing* become the petty insider tattle-tale of artists and intellectuals.

The problem of an adhocracy, according to the Canadian management guru Henry Mintzberg, is that because it avoids standardized categories and standardized outcomes, it is not bureaucratically efficient; it is “not good at doing ordinary things.”³⁸ Further, Mintzberg’s observation (fig.3) that all bureaucratic institutions are liable to being pulled apart and contrarily that all fluid adhocracies tend to become rigid bureaucracies, is borne out by the passage from *The Transit Bar* to *The Institute*.³⁹

In a fictitious 1997, in the wake of the dismantling of both the public health system and arts funding in Canada, Frenkel has imagined the federal government passing a bill to transform hospitals into *The Institute*, a corporate chain housing “mature” artists. The hospital reference raises the ambiguous status of the artist, who has been put – as the euphemism goes – into a “home” of some kind. Rhetoric associated with hygiene and health has underpinned the imagining of utopian communities such as Hausmann’s Paris, Lever’s Port Sunlight and, with particular relevance to *The Institute*, William Bullock’s “Hygeia,” a planned retirement community in Kentucky. Apropos of this analogy to planned utopias, the free love envisioned in Fourier’s phalansteries is revoked in *The Institute* by Frenkel’s reminder that sex, euphemized as the exchange of bodily fluids, is to

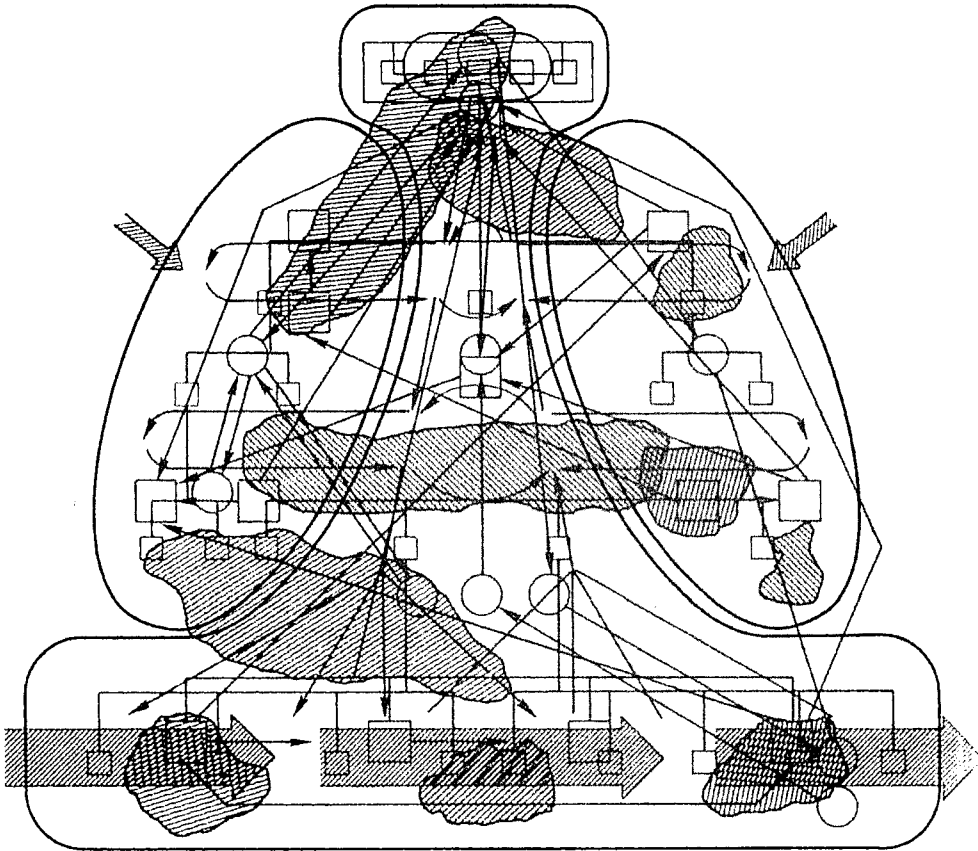


Figure 3-13. *A Combined Overlay: The Functioning of the Organization*

fig. 3 Henry Mintzberg, "A Combined Overlay: The Functioning of the Organization," in **The Structuring of Organizations: A synthesis of the Research** (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1979).

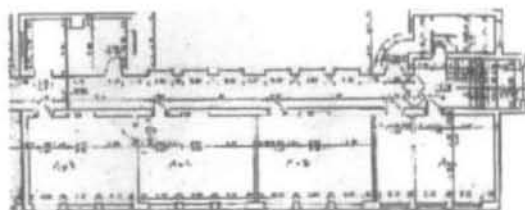
be monitored and administered. The chorus of Institute Bureaucrats chants: "Everyone knows that artists/ like children or madmen/ Are powerless or nuts/ Or both."⁴⁰ Frenkel represents the Liberal politician Sheila Copps, who was the Member of Parliament for Hamilton East for several decades, as the fictional Minister of Health and Culture. Copps praises this infantilizing of artists: "Mindful of the need of hard-working artists for wise attention to health matters, and of their selfless tendency, sometimes, to neglect their own well-being when immersed in a new project, *The Institute* has developed a unique Training Facility for its employees and as a result can guarantee a superior staff of care-givers." The subheading of a 1966 article on the CBC bureaucracy in the Canadian news magazine, *Maclean's*, was: "These are Creative People. They bear watching. These are CBC Administrative Personnel. They watch Creative People."⁴¹

This mad, infantilised, institutionalized spectre of the artist takes us back to the untenable management models of creative professional bureaucracies. It also takes us again, with a brutal bathos, from the contemporary Canadian disuse and misuse of hospitals to the Nazi's heinous abuses of hospitals.⁴² Frenkel's attentive virtual planning of *The Institute* reminds us of the maps and architectural plans that permeate the *Body Missing*. Just as the artist Melvin Charney has overlaid the design and layout of Auschwitz onto the rational modular grid of various historical envisionings of the utopian hygienic community, Frenkel has overlaid the bureaucratic structure onto all these architectural ghost towns and schematic diagrams of management studies. (figs.4 and 5).⁴³

Theories of the postmodern have tended to examine modernity's "world of organizational bureaucracy," of mass production and of standardization from which any social referent has been deleted. In this model of the modern, bureaucracy functions as an unhinged apparatus, or it substitutes for the dream that the abstract ideals of a state could take an administrative form.⁴⁴ Frenkel's institutionalized artists, presented within *The Institute* as interactive "personae," are the epitome of the decontextualized, decentred subject inhabiting a virtual, substituted environment. These personae also parody the collectivity of an avant-garde. They are marginal, not because they are thought to be radical, but because they are ever so slightly out of date, as their poignantly predictable achievements (in Canadian terms) suggest: "Actor, 55, female. Stratford, Shaw, CBC experience. ACTRA member," or "Governor General's Awards winner. Planning autobiography," or, "Landscape photographer, 66, male. Large format," and "Painter, 67, female. Student of Borduas."

The Institute is staffed by equally stale-dated cultural bureaucrats who have been left behind by the downsizing of federal government culture agencies such as the Canada Council and the CBC. These *Institute* bureaucrats have

The Artists' Spaces



The Loading Dock / The Ground Floor Studio / The Kitchen / The Garage
 The Garden / The Metal Shop / The Computer Centre / Martin's Office
 The Great Hall / The Upstairs Landing



fig. 4 Vera Frenkel, "Artists' Studios, Plan of Linz Offenes Kulturhaus," in **Body Missing**, Website, 1994-ongoing. http://www.yorku.ca/BodyMissing/artists/artists_ind.html

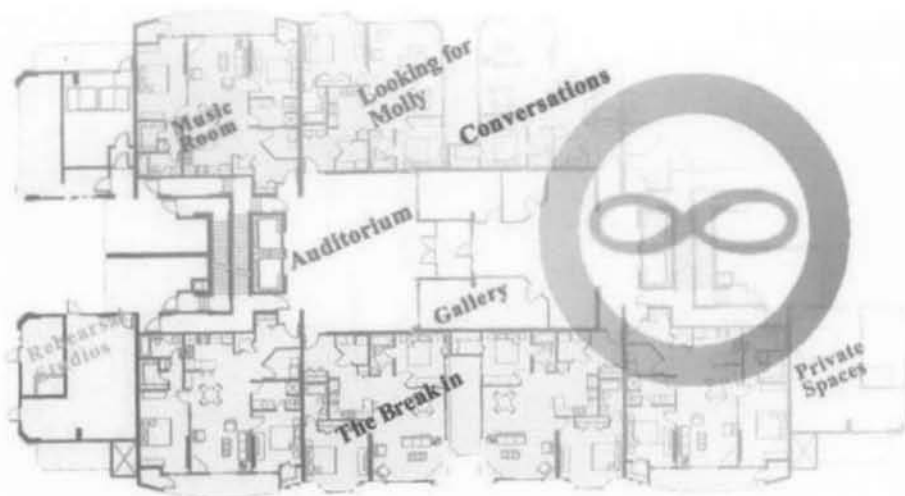


fig.5 Vera Frenkel, "Site Map," in *The Institute™: Or, What We Do for Love*, Website, 2003-ongoing. http://www.yorku.ca/theinst/site_map/map4.html

displayed exemplary post-Fordist flexibility and a zeal for reinventing themselves; they have been "retrained" in order to play a part in the brave new showcase world of *The Institute*. In Frenkel's preliminary radio play, we gather that the residents of *The Institute* are already anxious that *The Institute*, like the hospital it replaced, will be closed down by funding cuts. The chorus of administrators reveals bureaucratic method to be effectively functionless, except as a mode of avoidance and deferral: "We manage.... We manage...this branch/Of a country-wide chain.... In the course of which we..../Make no decisions/Escape all responsibility/Invent valid objections?/.... To any proposed solution/We have no power/Which gives us/.... Endless Authority."⁴⁵ This also reminds us that theorized bureaucracy exists outside of the constraints of ordinary time, and imposes a grid of simultaneity onto different times;⁴⁶ equally, the theorized heterotopia, like theorized language, exists as a place of perpetual deferral.⁴⁷

The Institute website also is a masterpiece of cheesy corporate design, embodying both the governmental longing to be a "real" corporation (i.e. a multinational capitalist), with the status and power that go beyond national boundaries. The website design also invokes the history of Canadian cultural

aspirations and policies. Among the many lovingly observed details is *The Institute*'s logo (fig.6), which recalls the "dynamic" slant of the Banff Centre logo (fig.7); this in turn owes something to Canada's CN (Canadian National Railways) logo, which was once praised by Marshall McLuhan as a Canadian "icon."

A statist bureaucracy is an odd economy in which it is difficult to evaluate the cost-benefit ratios and it is therefore necessary to imagine that if something is administered, it must have value in itself. This problem is compounded in the case of the administration of art, a commodity whose value is pegged to the prestige of having no intrinsic use-value. In the case of the works confiscated by the Nazis that are Frenkel's subject in *Body Missing*, valuation is vexed by the surrounding illicit history. Their having been stolen, having been lost and having been intended for Hitler's collection, all constitute paradoxical "value-added" factors that put them outside of the realm of ordinary market value. In the case of *The Institute*, problems of valuation are attached to matters of national health care and national culture. At stake in *The Institute* is the prestige of Canada's national health care system, which is enshrined in identity debates as the thing that differentiates us from Americans. As a tool of national identity, national health care is a metaphor for Canadian culture.

To some extent, Frenkel approaches *The Institute* through the problem of administering it. In *Body Missing* she recognized the massive labour of the *Kunstraub*; its sublimely bureaucratic administration, like the ignominious military operations it subtended, paradoxically came to nothing – there is no Hitler museum. A website is a suitable locus for works that deal with bureaucratic method: the apparently endless possibilities for navigational clicking allow us to imagine the indefinite as infinite. We enter a bureaucratic nightmare in which we might find that at the end, nothing could be done. The papers could not be processed in time, there were no applicable subsections or protocols, the processes could not be stopped, everything was out of our hands, or it was the responsibility of another department, and we have ended up in the same place, with nothing and with less than nothing, to show for it.

On the implications of corporate websites, and their applicability to Frenkel's work, we could consider the following passage on the website of the international accounting and management firm, PricewaterhouseCoopers:

Aided and abetted by powerful advances in communications technology and international financing, many corporations are growing into transnational giants with far-ranging influence on national and international economies. Much less analyzed is the fact that *critics*, in the form of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), are also globalizing and *using the same communications technology* to organize and coordinate their activities. The purpose of these NGOs is to call attention to corporate behaviour in the most remote corners of the world.⁴⁹



fig.6 Vera Frenkel, "Logo for The National Institute for the Arts," in **The Institute™: Or, What We Do for Love**, Website, 2003-ongoing.
http://www.yorku.ca/theinst/level_one/index_11.html



fig.7 Logo for The Banff Centre, Alberta, Canada.
<http://www.banffcentre.ca/zberg>

The perception that “corporations have grown too powerful,” it goes on to say, is exacerbated by “recent trends in government downsizing, privatization, and self-regulation.” The NGO, therefore, takes up technological tools to demand “greater transparency and disclosure.” Frenkel’s *Transit Bar* regulars and *The Institute* could be taken as types of NGOs; though the ironies of Price Waterhouse pitching the services of NGOs – surely a sign of their tendency to become corporation-like – are not lost on her.⁵⁰

The artist’s resistance must involve recognition of the rhetoric of persuasion used by government and other corporations; hence Frenkel’s language and design parodies corporate euphemisms and clichés. The subtitle of *The Institute*, “or what we do for love,” directs our attention not only to the bureaucratic administration of sexual encounters in *The Institute*, but more generally to the pious notion that government institutions exist benevolently for our own good. In Canada, at least, this rhetoric masks the privations caused by slashed health and welfare funding. In *One-Dimensional Man*, Herbert Marcuse analyzed the linguistic practices of the media and government, and the “managerial mode of thought” that suppresses any real attention to history or to the “factors behind the facts.” The “functionalized” simplified terminology used by media and government resists any subtlety, analysis, qualification or negation of what it pronounces.⁵¹ This manipulated language becomes a blunt instrument of political control. Frenkel was partly inspired by the Ontario government restructuring of hospitals, as described in the “Health Services Restructuring Commission Summary Report on Hospital Restructuring” brochure, from the heyday of late 1990s government cuts. In the report, the use of the word “better,” for example “better hospitals,” “better healthcare,” and “restructuring” to describe hospital closings, embodies just such “abridgement of meaning.”⁵² Cuts must be described as “change,” and change must in turn described as being neither “bad,” nor “good,” but, “better.” (fig.8)

Body Missing offers us the possibility of being virtual resistance workers, envisioning something actual as a consequence of our contact with the website. Similarly, in *The Institute*, we are meant to be doing something: but what? One of the contributors to *The Transit Bar* and *Body Missing*, was the Toronto psychoanalyst Jeanne Randolph, who has written on the operations of art in and on technology. In her 1986 essay, “Ambiguity and the Technical Object,”⁵³ Randolph discussed various psychoanalytic accounts of artists’ engagement with technology. She focuses on two foundational essays by Victor Tausk and Hans Sachs published in 1933, coincidentally the year of Hitler’s rise to power. Within this psychoanalytic narrative, the artist cannot merely situate technology as an alienated external danger because that attitude leads to helpless rage. Nor can the artist simply capitulate to the self-interested “usefulness” or “redemptive gadget” pitch made by manufacturers of technology. So how, Randolph asks, is

Better
HOSPITALS,
.....
Better
HEALTH CARE
.....
for the
FUTURE
.....

**Summary Report on
Hospital Restructuring**

1996-1999



HEALTH SERVICES RESTRUCTURING COMMISSION

April 1999

fig. 8 "Summary Report on Hospital Restructuring," Ontario Health Services Restructuring Commission. April, 1999.

the artist to plot a course that avoids “determinism, escapism or despair”? For Randolph, the answer lies in the recognition that we project our own ambivalences onto technology: it is we, and not the tools, who want to destroy. Yet coexisting with this destructive impulse is the countervailing desire to construct some “sociopolitical or cultural offering” that will be treasured in the future. Recognising this ambivalence, the artist needs to adopt a *reparative* technique that addresses whatever potential may remain in an “impure” or “ruined” “subject, object, idea, or form.” This technique doesn’t try to hide flaws, but rather to integrate traces of damage with any remaining qualities of value. This humane reparative approach constitutes the “foundation of artistic integrity.”⁵⁴

In Randolph’s terms, Frenkel’s websites could be thought to mediate the literal and figurative technologies and the agencies that support them. Her work may be taken as embodying that “ambiguity, perceptual fluidity, and non-complicity” that transforms technology into something “amenable to the interpretation and valuation of viewers affected by it.”⁵⁵ In *Body Missing*, Frenkel projects the darkness of the sociopolitical psyche and its apparatuses while precisely directing us, as *Transit Bar* regulars, to make an empathetic “gesture” toward “an earlier artist and an absent work.” We are to make some reparation for what has been lost, “as if in conversation with the past – whether in the form of an interrogation, a concrete poem, a personal history, studio re-enactment, or fiction.” This does not, Frenkel tells us, mean actual copying of works that have been lost, which would imply that something lost could be replaced. Rather, we are directed to make a gesture – whether we cast it as artistic, intellectual, poetical, ethical – merely as a move toward acknowledging the damage, toward reincorporating the virtue into the fatally ruined.

ELIZABETH LEGGE

Department of Art
University of Toronto

Notes

- 1 Walter BENJAMIN, "A Berlin Chronicle," in Michael W. Jennings, ed., *Walter Benjamin Selected Writings*, vol.2, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap, 1999), 595-637, 211.
- 2 *The Institute: Or, What We Do for Love* <<http://www.the-national-institute.org>>; *The Body Missing Project* <<http://www.yorku.ca/BodyMissing>>.
- 3 BENJAMIN, "A Berlin Chronicle," 211.
- 4 Haider is quoted in Isolde CHARIM, "Haider Kunst," in *FALTER* 48 – 95:19. The slogan, "The Future of Austria is our Art," from a 1994 campaign poster of the Freedom Party, is also reproduced.
- 5 The *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* has been made into a website (MIT Press/Design Knowledge Systems Group at the Technical University of Delft). It is profitable to line up its architecture and monuments and gardens with those of Frenkel's websites.
- 6 On the evocative heterotopia as a place of "poetic wonder," of "revelations of similitude hidden among the ruins," of "fragments of forgotten lives and objects," of "strange unsettling novel things," see Kevin HETHERINGTON, *The Badlands of Modernity: heterotopia and social ordering* (London: Routledge, 1997), 42-43, 50.
- 7 See Ruth EATON, *Ideal Cities: Utopianism and the (Un)Built Environment* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2002).
- 8 Liane LEFAIVRE, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili. Re-Configuring the Architectural Body in the Early Italian Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1997), 8.
- 9 Hannah ARENDT, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1966), 413.
- 10 Slavoj ZIZEK, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT/October, 1991), 151.
- 11 Ibid., 152.
- 12 Ibid., 153. For the novel as paranoid overinterpretation, see *Titan*, admired by the surrealists, in which the Frenkel-like narrator imagines himself at the centre of a network of spies. Jean Paul RICHTER, *Titan: A Romance. From the German of Jean Paul Friedrich Richter*, trans. Charles Timothy Brooks (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1862).
- 13 Vera FRENKEL, "Artists in Residence," Canadian Broadcasting Corporation radio broadcast "The Arts Today," 12 June 2000 <http://www.radio.cbc.ca/programs/artstoday/artontheweb/artistsinresidence/part_3.html>.
- 14 Jon RUDDY, "Will four thousand eight hundred and seventy seven CBC executives please stand up?" *Maclean's* (2 April 1966), 10-11.
- 15 Peter Becker and William Clark, eds. *Little Tools of Knowledge: Historical Essays on Academic and Bureaucratic Practices* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 1.
- 16 It has been argued that the great revolution of Taylorism (the scientific study of production line efficiency) was the separation of thought from making, in that decision-making was isolated in the administrative office, far from the production line, Henry MINTZBERG, *The Structuring of Organizations: A Synthesis of the Research* (London: Prentice-Hall, 1979), 74. In 1934 John Dewey, that theorist of modern systems, had noted the separation of "imagination" from "executive doing," and of "significant purpose" from work as quoted in Sigfried GIEDION, *Space, Time and Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), 12.

- 17 There is a subtrade in independently assembled kits made available by aficionados of certain kinds of building, such as "Lego Kits for Military Modelers."
- 18 Heimito von DODERER, *The Lighted Windows, or, The Humanization of the Bureaucrat Julius Zihal*, trans. John S. Barrett (Riverside, CA: Ariadne, 2000), 33. See also Becker and Clark, *Little Tools of Knowledge*, 3.
- 19 Benjamin BUCHLOH, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetics of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October* 55 (Winter 1990):105-43.
- 20 Michel FOUCAULT, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. Sheridan Smith (London: Tavistock, 1972).
- 21 Becker and Clark, *Little Tools of Knowledge*, 27.
- 22 von DODERER, *The Lighted Windows*, 17, 28.
- 23 BENJAMIN, "A Berlin Chronicle," 211.
- 24 See Alan SCHECHNER's photographic work, *Bar Code*, in *Mirroring Evil: Nazi Imagery/ Recent Art* (New York: Jewish Museum, 2003).
- 25 See Hans Erich BÖDEKER, "On the Origins of the 'Statistical Gaze': Modes of Perception, Forms of Knowledge and ways of Writing in the Early Social Science," in Becker and Clark, *Little Tools of Knowledge*, 169-195.
- 26 The Hollerith machine, manufactured by a subsidiary of IBM, indicates the role of impersonal data management in industrialized mass murder. Information stored on Hollerith cards in the 1939 census later assisted in locating and rounding up Jews. See Gotz ALY and Karl Heinz ROTH, *The Nazi Census: Identification and Control in the Third Reich*, trans. Edwin Black (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003).
- 27 See Yaacov LOZOWICK, *Hitler's Bureaucrats: The Nazi Security Police and the Banality of Evil*, trans. Haim Watzman (New York and London: Continuum, 2002).
- 28 From Heimrad BÄCKER, "Widerspiegelung," *Die Rampe, Hefte für Literatur* (Linz: Land Oberösterreich, 1994), 60-61.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 George GRANT, *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, [1965] 1989), 18.
- 31 "The union of the provinces...was singularly lacking in the emotional content of nationalism in the traditional sense." G. P. de T. GLAZEBROOK, "Some Thought on Canadian Nationalism," in *Empire and Nations*, eds. Harvey L. Dyck and H. Peter Krosby (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 19.
- 32 This is described as "a typical Canadian venture-pioneering in another field," as the "pushing back" of "another frontier." Brooke CLAXTON, *Opening Proceedings of the Canada Council* (Ottawa: The Queen's Printer, 1957), 15.
- 33 The myth of the railways is most memorably set out in Gordon Lightfoot's song, "The Canadian Railway Trilogy," released in Canada's centennial year, 1967, and in Pierre BERTON's popular history, *The Last Spike* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971).
- 34 See Diana NEMIROFF, "A History of Artist-Run Spaces in Canada, with particular reference to Véhicule, A Space and the Western Front." Master of Arts Thesis, Concordia University, Montréal, 1985.
- 35 *Museums by Artists*, AA Bronson and Peggy Gale, eds. (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1983), 29-30.

36 "In the 1980's Hamilton had entered the economic downturn common to most steel towns in the developed world. Since then, considerable effort has been put into diversifying the economy and revitalizing the moribund city centre. Recent efforts have been concentrating on building expressways through Hamilton's impressive natural landscape, and moving the waterfront away from the heavy industry represented by the two main steel corporations, Stelco and Dofasco." The former Customs House is now The Workers' Art and Heritage Centre.

37 Henry MINTZBERG, *The Structuring of Organizations: A synthesis of the Research* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1979), 371.

38 Ibid., 463.

39 Ibid., 455.

40 Frenkel's choruses remind us of Julius Zihal's nightmare in which bureaucrats appear as marching giant insects who chant, "Because of illness, due to sickness, on account of illness, due to unbecoming illnesses.... Because of the personal element, due to the personal element on account of the personal nature, due to unbecoming elements, due to personality, because of personality, due to that element." Von DODERER, *The Lighted Windows*, 132.

41 Jon RUDDY, "Will four thousand eight hundred and seventy seven CBC executives please stand up?" 10-11.

42 Henry FRIEDLANDER, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995). In at least six hospitals, disabled and "deviant" people were murdered by ordinary nurses and doctors.

43 See for example Melvin Charney's drawing, *City of Death/ Heavenly City (After Matthias Hafenreffer's Reconstruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, Tübingen, Germany, 1631)*, 1986; http://expositions.bnf.fr/utopie/grand/4_88.htm

44 See Frederic JAMESON, *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, 1991), 15.

45 Von DODERER, *The Lighted Windows*, 132.

46 BÖDEKER, "On the Origins of the 'Statistical Gaze,'" 179.

47 HETHERINGTON, *The Badlands of Modernity*, 141.

48 The designer Allan Fleming used a continuous flowing line from "C" to "N" to symbolize "the movement of people, materials and messages from one point to another." In 2000 the CN logo was listed as one of the "Top 50 Corporate Logos of All Time," in an international competition sponsored by the *Financial Times* and the *Report on Business*. It was the only Canadian design on the list.

49 Mel WILSON and Rosie LOMBARDI, "Globalization and Its Discontents: The Arrival of Triple-Bottom-Line Reporting," *Ivey Business Journal* (September-October 2001). Quoted on PricewaterhouseCoopers website, accessed March 2004: <http://www.pwcglobal.com/extweb/manissue.nsf/docid/F2C229B0D463808285256AEC005F1A37>

50 Especially applicable to an understanding of the shadowy *Transit Bar* regulars, both within *Body Missing* and as transmuted into residents of *The Institute* is Kevin Hetherington's observation that in heterotopic spaces "Great Man" history is replaced by "actor networks" of individuals and forces and organizations: "Margins, orderings and the laboratories of society," *Badlands of Modernity*, 20-39.

51 Herbert MARCUSE, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon, 1964), 97 and 111.

52 Ibid., 87 and 96.

53 Jeanne RANDOLPH, "Ambiguity and the Technical Object," in Dana Friis-Hansen, *Visionary Apparatus: Michael Snow and Juan Geuer* (MIT: Hayden Gallery, 1986), 39; see also RANDOLPH's "Influencing Machines: The Relations Between Art and Technology" (1984), in *Psychoanalysis and Synchronized Swimming* (Toronto: YYZ, 1991), 37-54.

54 RANDOLPH, "Ambiguity and the Technical Object," 40.

55 D.W. Winnicott, quoted by RANDOLPH, "Ambiguity and the Technical Object," 41. See Vera FRENKEL, *The Bar Report* (Toronto: Art Gallery of York University, 1993), 20: A character does some intellectual name-dropping: "You know me. I can't resist. Hitler. Freud. Whatever I can get my hands on. A Winnicott article or a monograph on Klein...."

Résumé

«UN MEILLEUR LIEU DE VIE»

La poésie bureaucratique dans *Body Missing* et *The Institute* de Vera Frenkel

Dans son installation et son site web *The Body Missing* (1994 en cours), Vera Frenkel s'attaque aux répercussions durables du *Kunstraub* nazi, le grand pillage d'œuvres d'art durant le troisième Reich. Dans son œuvre actuelle, *The Institute*TM: *Or, What We Do for Love*, Frenkel tisse les implications de cette sorte de bureaucratie qui sous-tendait le *Kunstraub* et l'Holocauste, en une enquête sur la condition des artistes vieillissants au Canada. Au cours d'une année 1997 fictive, dans le sillage du démantèlement du système public de santé et du financement des arts au Canada, Frenkel imagine que le gouvernement fédéral adopte une loi pour transformer les hôpitaux en un réseau corporatif d'un océan à l'autre, *The Institute*, où sont logés des artistes «âgés» et des administrateurs culturels devenus superflus. La référence aux hôpitaux rappelle le statut équivoque de l'artiste, qui a été placé – selon un euphémisme connu – dans une sorte de «foyer». *The Institute* est une parodie de site web corporatif, dont la section de cartes de vœux virtuelles offre une carte avec un champ générique qui pourrait signifier «être mis au vert».

Frenkel renverse les traditions d'avant-garde des foyers pour artistes, particulièrement dans un contexte canadien : *The Institute* est l'effondrement des

idéaux communautaristes collectifs de nombreux centres gérés par des artistes et financés par des subventions du gouvernement, à l'apogée des années 1970. Elle transporte ce «réseau de communautés» des années 1970 dans un «âge d'or» euphémique. Le sous-titre d'un article de 1966 sur la bureaucratie de la CBC, dans le magazine *Maclean's*, se lisait : «Voici des créateurs. Ils sont à surveiller. Voici le personnel administratif de la CBC. Il surveille les gens créatifs» Ce spectre fou, infantilisé, institutionnalisé de l'artiste nous conduit vers des modèles de gestion intenables de bureaucraties professionnelles créatives, lesquelles, selon le gourou canadien de la gestion Henry Mintzberg, ont tendance à être inefficaces au plan bureaucratique, «incapables de faire des choses ordinaires». Si *The Institute* de Frenkel existait, quelle forme administrative prendrait-il et quelles tensions aurait-il à subir ? On pourrait se tourner vers les communautés idéales imaginées aux XVIII^e et XIX^e siècles, telles les phalanstères de Fourier, où chacun s'épanouit dans le travail et la liberté sexuelle. Dans *The Institute* ces éléments sont réfractés, à la manière canadienne, à travers la lentille moins idéaliste des études de gestion. *The Institute* montre les complexités et l'hybridation de toute bureaucratie professionnelle, en s'inspirant de ce qu'on pourrait voir comme une gestion romantique : la notion d'un ferment centralisé, à pollinisation croisée, sur place, toujours disponible, d'intellectuels réunis dans un seul espace. Il entre dans la catégorie des «combinaisons bureaucratie/adhocratie» où l'artiste de profession profite du «meilleur des deux mondes». Il est lié à une organisation tout en restant libre d'agir à son gré. Il évite virtuellement toutes les pressions et tractations que suppose l'interaction avec ses pairs. Mais, évidemment, comme toute personne vivant en institution le sait, l'interaction avec les pairs est nécessaire, car nous savons que quelqu'un, quelque part, mijote quelque chose qui aura des effets négatifs pour nous, pour notre financement, pour notre statut. Dans *The Institute*, les terribles implications du commérage, de l'espionnage et de la dissimulation qui traversaient *Body Missing* deviennent de vulgaires cancans d'initiés entre artistes et intellectuels.

Après *Body Missing*, *The Institute* peut sembler d'une sentimentalité banale, mais on y trouve d'étranges inflexions mutuelles, en voyant comment la bureaucratie du nazisme culturel déteint sur sa forme contemporaine, atrophiée, pusillanime, dans l'administration canadienne des arts. La bureaucratie d'État demeure, naturellement, cruciale dans nos démocraties occidentales compromises, apparemment au service d'un certain nombre de positions idéologiques vaguement dissimulées qui, toutes, camouflent leurs insincérités respectives. Le seul référent solide est un point de fuite, non pas vers l'horizon de possibilités éthiques, mais vers le «résultat». Dans l'apothéose inversée de Frenkel, les excès de la bureaucratie nazie sont punis en étant resitués dans des conditions réduites et humiliantes.

The Institute est, d'une certaine manière, l'apothéose de la vision canadienne nationalisée des arts. Il représente, en même temps, la réduction de l'académie à un «centre de soins» euphémisé et bureaucratisé, à travers un processus d'attrition gouvernementale. Cette vision est en accord avec la tradition canadienne d'une fonction publique puissante, où tout pouvoir exercé de manière évidente doit être

déplacé vers l'administration. Dans son essai phare sur l'identité canadienne, *Lament for a Nation*, George Grant prétend que la fonction publique est un «instrument essentiel grâce auquel l'identité nationale est préservée», grâce auquel le Canada évite le continentalisme américain. Là encore, pour se distinguer des États-Unis, la formation historique propre du Canada doit beaucoup plus à des accommodements pragmatiques qu'à une idéologie nationaliste.

Un prototype de *The Institute* est le Banff Centre for the Arts, où Frenkel a été artiste en résidence et où elle a réalisé *The Institute*. La situation géographique de Banff incarne la mythologie nationaliste de l'unification du Canada par le chemin de fer. Son nom même est l'écho des origines écossaises des premiers directeurs de la Canadian Pacific Railway et d'une histoire du Canada impériale et sentimentale. Le Banff Centre incarne les aspects de la vie canadienne contemporaine puisqu'il comprend, outre le Centre for the Arts, le Banff Centre for Management qui a accueilli des conférences portant sur les questions récurrentes dans les débats sur l'identité canadienne – la politique de l'eau, la gestion des forêts et des parcs et, surtout, la nationalisation des soins médicaux. En tant que réseau de «centres» subventionnés par le gouvernement, *The Institute* de Frenkel se présente comme un ordre spatial typiquement canadien, récapitulant les modèles régionaux dispersés du nationalisme canadien.

The Institute incarne aussi le cycle de transformations urbaines où des entrepôts industriels inutilisés deviennent des lofts d'artistes, puis des galeries, puis des lofts et condominiums que les artistes ne peuvent s'offrir. Hamilton, Ontario, le lieu supposé de *The Institute*, est une ville sidérurgique qui cherche à se démarquer de l'industrie lourde et à rehausser son «image» en tant que «destination artistique». Comme ailleurs, mais sur une échelle plus modeste, ses institutions artistiques agissent comme une sorte de façade qui camoufle une réelle et traumatisante perturbation économique et sociale causée par une économie post-fordienne sous laquelle tous les nationalismes tendent à être subsumés.

Traduction : Élise Bonnette