

MOCCA Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art

Yvonne Lammerich: text for the catalogue *Empire of Dreams*:

A proposition in play: *Dreaming myself and my world* (It seems clear that we construct our own idea of reality and what is real.)

As an artist I have been interested, even motivated by questions of being and knowing. A few years ago now I came across a book by John D. Barrow called *Between Inner Space and Outer Space* (Oxford 1999) It made me realize that most of my thinking was informed by imagining a relatively secure separation between what was happening inside my body and what were objects and socially secured categories of knowledge outside my body. This is a convention in order to understand the role of the body in relationship to society and culture in general. For example, the Freudian body, the feminist Body, the social body in relationship to power structures (Foucault). The body both as metaphor and metonym.

What I had not really *pictured* is just how the inner and outer reality are in fact from another perspective one and the same. While, not surprisingly, I intuited this, I had not pictured historically the body/mind world as a biological entity: in other words, the organism that has evolved from its earliest inception by interacting with the material and physical forces of the world in continuity while becoming more complex in time. I now accept that the world and I have a deep biological and material common history and of course as a result collectively a deep social history. I am worldly (This has a different meaning here than the conventional idea of a worldly traveler!).

The complexity of unraveling this relationship between inner and outer reality can be illustrated by two examples and must by necessity begin with the body's ability to reflect consciously on this question. What exactly is consciousness is a hot topic of debate in the present. Johann H. Lambert in the 18th century, reflecting on the phenomenon of consciousness, observed that he could differentiate between an erroneously registered appearance of the world (as we know today wrong assumptions made by our perceptual and sensory apparatus) – what is also called an illusion – and the actual appearance of the world *as somehow verifiable*. Hegel on the other hand, interested in the Phenomenology of Mind in the early 19th century, suggested that the knowing subject – you and me – apprehends the world through representations of the world in which the object content and the act of knowing is the same. This at least for the time being elicited an apparently coherent relationship between mind and world content.

However, this did not explain how miss-readings can occur and what was consciousness itself, how one could observe and make judgments. Edmund Husserl's investigation into the phenomenology of mind/body suggested near the beginning of the twentieth century that every act of consciousness is intentionally directed towards some object, declaring human consciousness as a *lived* experience and not dependent on any prior assumptions about what we are about to experience. Phenomenology as defined by Husserl is the investigation of what is given to mind and how it comes to consciousness. Consciousness can now be understood as a unified act between both the thinking perceiving subject and object that is being perceived. And this is the important contribution by which Husserl liberated the way we can think about how we might know our world – and the question as to whether reality exists outside or inside the consciousness of the subject could now be suspended.

Phenomenology can be understood on the one hand in the pre-critical material sense, as a faithful description of phenomena, the sensations of perceiving, colour, texture, sound, feelings freed from interpretation. But in order to move these sensations to consciousness, a conceptual construct is necessary. This construct, associated with judgments and beliefs about this pure phenomenality apprehended by reason, gives sensations conceptual properties. This free movement between pure *perception*, which can only ever be individual and personal, and *conceptions* or conceptual constructs of judgment and beliefs about the world that we can share is what Husserl meant by the *human life world*.

Clearly at every moment over time human beings have apprehended their world through the specificity of their physiology – mind and body. Today compared to 2000 years ago, for example, human physiology has changed little, yet it has changed; what has changed dramatically is what we know about how we know and how we believe in the experience we have of our world. I am giving primacy to the body, as I understand that all we make – including social and cultural structures and gesture as well as technology and their innovations – is part of a fluid elaboration of our bodily world's inherent potential.

A more recent observation is made by Antonio Damasio, the eminent neurologist of brain functions (*The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotions in the Making of Consciousness*, 1999). He notes that we can conceive of ourselves as an entity in the world, but even more astounding we can also conceive of ourselves conceiving ourselves. In other words I can be simultaneously my own audience and my own actor in this *human life world*. I fluidly move from one position to the other, being not only me but also the *other*. This is very useful in art making, where we are constantly switching from producer to viewer.

I ask myself: is this what gives me my ability to dream as well as my ability to project my dreams? If there is neither a clear separation between being me as the here and the dream projected as the there, then where is it, where am I, what am I? *The Empire of Dreams* is then an environment built as a response to the phenomenological experience we have of our world – a world that is now open to new possibilities of knowing, understanding, re-presenting and making. The Virtual is no longer a foreign country, it is *us*.

David Liss' proposition of an exhibition that presented a number of individual takes on the phenomenological relationship each artist has in responding to their lived environment or *human life world* does not need to conform to a thematic; rather, the title is offered as a tool, as an opening by which to understand each artwork for its own perceptual and conceptual dimensions of the lived world whose phenomenal relationship can never be experienced wholly, and by necessity is given to us and re-presented from various perspectives and points of view/beliefs.

Rimeter: description

The work Rimeter (Per (through) – Rimeter) circumscribes an eight foot diameter projecting disk that lifts beyond the wall's surface. That part of the disc that is hidden in the wall is annunciated on the surface of the wall with a pencil drawing as a continuity of the raised disc.

This work addresses my own struggle to try and make a representation that articulates our fluid, life space world. In a world where we discover every day new understandings of what we are; in a world where “*music and speech develop so simultaneously that they seem to be mirror images; where people bond and perceive the sound around us, speaking in tones, in a world where forgetting helps us remember,*” we have barely begun to tell the story of what and where we are in the *Empire of our Dreams*.