In 1959, during the Cold War climate of the threat of nuclear annihilation, the Italian Situationist Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio converted a Parisian gallery space into an enveloping, synesthetic environment called Cavern of Anti-Matter. In 2002, in the wake of September 11 and the rise of global terrorism, the Swiss artist Thomas Hirschhorn transformed the space of a New York gallery into an interactive network of caves with his sculpture Cavemanman. This article explores the critical significance and fascination of such urban archaeological performances that strategically negate the modern paradigm of the gallery, the white cube, through a process of conversion into what resemble primitive, cavelike shelters. This conversion process is in turn understood as part of a broader critique of modern forms of urban living. In Gallizio’s case, his cavern is read as a critique of functionalism and its “disease of banalization,” epitomized by the homogenized architectural units designed by Le Corbusier. Hirschhorn’s cave, on the other hand, is analyzed as a critique of a ubiquitous culture of display that risks reducing subjects and objects to the fetishizing logic of the commodity. In both cases, I will also question how successful these seemingly outmoded architectural devices are in producing a countersubject that can undo a modernist homogenization, reification, even terrorization, of its constituted subject(s).

Cavern of Anti-Matter, or Architecture by the Roots

A specific attack on Le Corbusier’s functionalist urban designs appeared in a proto-Situationist article (published in Potlatch) called “Skyscrapers by the Roots” (1954): “Le Corbusier is trying to do away with the streets . . . his program? To divide life into closed, isolated units, into societies of perpetual surveillance; no more opportunities for uprisings or meaningful encounters: to enforce automatic resignation.” The effect of his basic architectural unit, the modular cell (which


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was modeled on the prison) and the division of the city into discrete, atomized zones was not just the production of spaces that isolated and contained its inhabitants; each cell also performed as a panoptic machine, disciplining, shaping, and fixing its occupants. For the Situationists, the projected inhabitants produced by these so-called “machines for living” were inevitably living-dead automatons.²

In order to undo and move beyond what they saw as the disciplining, homogenizing, and ultimately dehumanizing effect of modernist forms of urban high-rise living, the Situationists developed a practice of critical urbanism called “unitary urbanism.” This was understood as a strategic reappropriation, reterritorialization, and immanent transformation of existing urban spaces (or what the Situationists called an “architectural détournement”) as a point of departure for the emergence of yet unknown modes of living.³ What follows is an exploration of Gallizio’s “cavern” as an example of unitary urbanism, where, I argue, it is preexisting gallery conditions that undergo an architectural détournement, but as a microdemonstration of a macrodesire, namely, to attack modernist architecture at the roots, so to speak, and with it the disciplined subjectivity it produces.

On May 13, 1959, the Parisian public was invited to the opening of Gallizio’s conversion of the René Drouin Galerie into Cavern of Anti-Matter. The rigid geometry of the gallery was canceled out (or détourned) by the cavern’s sagging canvas

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² Le Corbusier’s modular system of architectural proportion was based on the bodily dimensions of a six-foot English policeman, i.e., his neoplatonic ideal unit of universal measurement and proportion was literally a cop, a unit that metaphorically polices all boundaries, all differences.


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structure and the windows to the outside world were covered over, helping to conceal, and thereby transform, this street-level location into a metaphorically low and subterranean space. As an amateur archaeologist, Gallizio was well aware that, spatially, to go underground also signifies to go back in time. We can thus read his construction of such a seemingly archaic, even typically primitive, form of habitation (registered here by the childlike daubs of paint and dirt on the floors, walls, and ceiling) as an embrace of a decidedly antimodern abode, and by association an equally outmoded (even prehistoric) projected inhabitant. Such a spatiotemporal retreat within the present is an ambivalent strategy. On the one hand, it implies a nostalgic, even retrogressive, longing for a less enlightened time, an attempt, perhaps, to go back into the dark ages in order to reanimate some imagined, lost paradise—notably, for this Situationist, a precapitalist arcadia, understood as a more innocent space-time not yet colonized by capitalist reification. This perhaps accounts for its melancholic appearance, described at the time as a “dismal shelter” (baraque lugubre). On the other hand, a more enlightened reading of the outmoded cavern is also possible if, for example, we consider Gallizio’s friend and collaborator (and fellow Situationist) Asger Jorn’s criticism of functionalist architecture as failing to take into account the psychological conditions of the imagination that underpin the undisciplined (other) side of the modernist subject. In other words, what the rationalized and disciplined subject represses is its psychic and unconscious life. From this perspective the cavern is not merely a past or outmoded place, but also a hollow or hole within the present that exposes what the modern already secretly contains. As Gallizio’s good friend Gaston Bachelard suggests in his book *The Poetics of Space* (also published in 1959), the psychic value of low, subterranean spaces, such as cellars or caves, is as the other side or underside support of high-rise or attic spaces. Where the high represents elevated, abstract, proper thought, the low represents its hidden or suppressed other, the realm of imaginative, precarious, unconscious thought processes. This suggests that within the proper space of the white cube, Gallizio stages a return of the improper, which takes on an uncertain, even anxious, form because what has been repressed never returns in a benign state (the distortion is itself a marker of its former repressed state). This perhaps accounts for the unpleasant ambience and experience of entering the cavern, described by one contemporary press review as “suffocating, vehement, and violent.” It was literally a dangerous place, due to the highly combustible chemical resins and varnishes used to seal in the broken mirror and glass fragments embedded in the thickly encrusted allover painted surfaces; one review candidly remarked, “it was forbidden to smoke.” The clean air of the rarefied gallery is undone by the sticky,
cloying atmosphere of this rather hellish enclosure. My contention here, however, is that Gallizio’s outmoded cavern is revelatory, rather than retrogressive, in its attempt to stage a return of what modern, elevated modes of habitation repress. It is therefore not an embrace of an irrational, primitive space per se, but a strategic use of the irrational to expose what the Situationists understood as the terrorism done to the subject under functionalist conditions of living.

If for the Situationists Le Corbusier’s skyscrapers worked to isolate, enclose, and fix their inhabitants (thereby deploying what Jonathan Crary has called the “anti-nomadic” techniques of modern urban planning), then Gallizio negates this by prioritizing a decidedly ambulatory or nomadic perspective that presupposes fleshy drifters. Sensate and mobile participants were both anticipated and activated by this space, which included random squirts of perfume and the triggering of unexpected noises emitted by a motion-detector sound device called a *teremino-fono* that was hidden behind the unframed rolls of canvas walls. The frequency of the noise produced depended on the vibrations triggered by the speed and location of passing or orbiting bodies: for example, the vibrations of close proximity produced a high pitch, and distanced movements a low one. In opposition to the “modular protestant” Le Corbusier, whose isolated subjects were denied meaningful encounters in the streets, Gallizio sets up a collision of multiple subjectivities within this street-level underworld of unexpected sensory adventures. In contrast to what the SI conceived of as the passive boxes of modernist architecture, where technology, such as television, is used to subdue, distract, and placate its captive audiences, we have here a use of modern, polyphonic sound devices to surprise, excite, and confound its mobile agitators/activators; this is a place not for passive actors but wandering, vitalized “livers.” The playful construction of this “cavern” follows the ambition of unitary urbanism to use the given environment as a terrain for participatory games. The quiet, contemplative gallery with its “do not touch” policy is *dévouré* into an unruly, noisy, smelly, kinaesthetic adventure playground. A space apart for play is no longer devalued as the preserve for the child, but play as such is recentered as a value productive of collective forms of nonalienated or “lived” experiences.

Gallizio successfully applies and extends, within the interior space of the gallery, the principle of a Situationist urban *dévivre*, a type of collective, aleatory drifting through a cityscape in order to solicit unfamiliar, nonhabituated responses. This cavern dweller is encouraged to lose his or her way in the murky environment, to get disorientated—tactics that promote a desire to discover a new self, where established patterns of behavior are undone. It is important to stress that unitary urbanism was not concerned with fixing the parameters of such new behavioral discoveries. Rather, it was about constructing a space in which “unexpected forms” could develop. Such a provisional horizon was emphasized by the temporary aspect of this limited duration installation and by the impermanence of its structure: this was no fixed, rock-bound cave for settled troglodytes, but an itinerant shelter, a paradoxically portable, tentlike cavern suited for
nomadic travelers, whose transient and makeshift abodes contested Le Corbusier’s model of an eternal and permanent modern architecture.\textsuperscript{7}

Gallizio’s deliberate transformation of the gallery into an experiential, nonutilitarian playground also appears as a direct critique of functionalism. Where in contrast to \textit{work}, a space within the city is given over to idleness, shiftlessness, to the pleasures to be found in the uselessness of a space that encourages one to get lost, to aimlessly drift and waste time. Yet, this does not mean that the practice of unitary urbanism was opposed to the functional use value of social space as such, since it was defined not just as a reaction to functionalism, but as a move that would surpass it: “it is a matter of reaching (beyond the immediately useful) an enthralling, functional environment.”\textsuperscript{8} What is at stake here is a search for a means to transform use value into something more enthralling, fascinating (\textit{passionant}), that is, to add to use something beyond an instrumental valuation. Such a refunctioned model of use is evident in Gallizio’s parody of productivist aesthetics when he fashions a garment of clothing out of the cavern’s crusty, crystalline fabric, which was significantly called Industrial Painting. This somewhat impractical dress, its ornamental and kitsch appeal, can also be read as a return

\textsuperscript{7} The contemporary description of the cave as a “foreign, itinerant shelter” emphasizes its portable or nomadic character, as well as the tendency for rooted subjects to regard those of unfixed abode as alien or strange. See ibid.

\textsuperscript{8} “L’urbanisme unitaire à la fin des années 50,” p. 12.
and revaluation (in the positive) of modernism’s repressed. In the sense that in contrast to Adolf Loos’s “modernist” rejection or repression of superfluous decoration as a criminal offense and a sign of a retrogression to a more primitive and uncivilized stage of man’s evolution, the Situationists interpreted kitsch as a sign of the “revolutionary classes,” who used the low, the excessive, and the disordered to upset all regulated and ordered forms associated with “the ideal, with repression and sublimation.”

Yet utopian ambitions to productively unite art and life can have a dystopian outcome. More than a visual resemblance, therefore, might exist between the photos of Gallizio’s Industrially Painted fashion models and Cecil Beaton’s use of paintings by Jackson Pollock as a backdrop to fashion plates for *Vogue* magazine in the early 1950s. As T. J. Clark suggests, these reveal what he calls a “bad dream of modernism,” a fear of art’s reduction to a lifestyle accessory, a sort of “apocalyptic wallpaper.” Even though the Situationists were happy to embrace such an apocalyptic scenario if it meant the meltdown of all divisions among specialized labors, including that of art production, they were also aware of the historical recuperation of avant-garde tactics by the culture industry. From this perspective Gallizio’s low-couture fashion display risks becoming an entertaining spectacle rather than resisting the conditions of the society of the spectacle, whereby its ludic aspects are reduced to playful distractions, rather than being part of an agonistic project to challenge a reified life with forms of creative production as the basis for a new, liberating life praxis.

Gallizio’s female “model,” however, represented more than a refunctioned prop for such a playfully kitsch couture, because she figured as a prototype for what he termed a “provisional reality.” On the invitation card to the exhibition the model was described as representing the result of an encounter between “the antimatter of the ceiling and the matter of the ground.” In scientific terms the

9. This description of the SI’s embrace of all things kitsch is taken from an account of Asger Jorn’s essay “Intimate Banalities” (1941) given in Peter Wollen’s “Bitter Victory: The Art and Politics of the Situationist International,” in Elizabeth Sussman, ed., *On the Passage of a Few People Through a Rather Brief Moment in Time: The Situationist International, 1957–1972*, exh. cat. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989), p. 47. As for “Industrial Painting,” this was conceived of as having a use value beyond that of an experimental art work. Its collective mode of production *en masse* with the help of so-called painting machines (enabling it to be sold cheaply by the meter), and its deliberately haphazard, nonspecialized, and childlike character served as a model of creative practice ideally attainable and available to everyone, who could then use it to enliven all sorts of social spaces, be it worn or used to envelop walls, streets, buildings, interiors, or motorways. See my “Pinot-Gallizio’s Industrial Painting: Towards a Surplus of Life,” *Oxford Art Journal* 28, no. 3 (2005), pp. 391–405.


12. The caption to the image on page 91 translates as “‘provisional reality,’ dressed like the walls, person in the cavern of anti-matter.”
outcome of such a collision between matter and its other, antimatter, is a burst of electromagnetic energy called annihilation radiation. On the invitation Gallizio translates the resulting blast of atomic radiation into the term “provisional reality” and he transposes the process of annihilation out of the realm of particle physics and into the artistic realm of his Cavern of Anti-Matter. By analogy, the irradiated meltdown of matter is mimicked in the runny, formless state of the Industrially Painted environment. But a more significant by-product of this space of annihilation is the creation of a provisional subjectivity presented in the feminine. Of course there are Frankenstein-like overtones here, with the male creator using and manipulating nature (which is typically represented in the feminine, as when Gallizio refers to the cavern as the “uterus of the world”) in order to make a new human/world order. Atypically, however, the female is not represented as a sacrificial victim who is destroyed by such an obliterating process, but as its emergent offspring. Moreover, it is an ideal and feminized other who is celebrated rather than feared here.

Significantly, Gallizio’s description of the cavern as an interuterine space emphasizes its immersive aspect (also indicated at a visual level by the model’s mimicry of the space around her, dressed as she is in the same material stuff). But a desire to return to a womblike space also reveals what Lacan calls the subject’s “deepest desire for death” in its playing out of a preoedipal fantasy of a fused unity with the mother: in other words, the womb represents the subject’s tomb. My contention, however, is that it is not the disappearance of the subject or a regression to a non-I state that is at stake in Gallizio’s immersive uterus. On the contrary, the work is about the emergence of a new provisional subjectivity, one not yet fully established, institutionalized, or disciplined. This unfinished and unformed subject emerges through Gallizio’s fabrication of a cavernous space, literally defined as a cavity or hole in space. By constructing this hole in the modernist white cube, Gallizio opens a space in which the subject expands rather than is contained. In a sense he unplugs modernist architecture and by so doing reveals a hole or gap in the subject—a gap between the subject and the modernist

13. Of course, the history of avant-garde creative production is littered with examples of the male artist’s desire for modes of autogenesis. These “bachelor-machines” attempt to give birth to a creative act without the need of a female reproductive system or mother: hence Gallizio’s desire for his manmade “uterus.” However, Gallizio’s “provisional” creative figure does not emerge through a process of a creative renaissance, a birth, but is constructed as the residue of a process of annihilation. Gallizio’s phrase “the uterus of the world” appears in Libero Andreotti, Introduction to Situationists, Art, Politics, Urbanism (Barcelona: Museu d’Art Contemporani, 1996), p. 30.

14. Such a drive to visual indistinction, for example, camouflaging insects, has been described by Roger Caillois as akin to the fear of external incorporation evidenced by schizophrenia, where the subject experiences space as a devouring and possessing force. See his “Mimétisme et psychasthénie légendaire,” Minotaure 7 (June 1935).

system. In other words Gallizio’s, *Cavern of Anti-Matter* works to crack open the present, in order to contest and undo it from within, or better, to hollow it out from below, at the roots.\(^\text{16}\)

**Cavemanman, or an Antimonument to the Spectacle of Display**

Over the last several years the Swiss-born artist Thomas Hirschhorn has fabricated a series of “displays,” his name for the creative environments he stages both within and outside the gallery or museum, typically consisting of everyday disposable, but symbolically loaded, artifacts. His signature materials include cardboard, brown packing tape, recycled newspapers, advertisements, stickers, and an abundance of silver-and-gold-colored aluminum foil. From these seemingly banal, everyday materials Hirschhorn constructs dense, complex, dynamic environments, which also include sculpted props, TV monitors continuously playing video sequences, and texts stuck all over the walls, which are usually illuminated with fluorescent light strips. Trained as a graphic designer, he refuses to make a distinction between so-called high-art materials and low-art ones. Indeed, he sees his hybrid position as an artist-designer as having a specific political potential: “I was not interested in making graphic design for an ideology. I wanted to give form to things that revolted me, that I could not understand, that I could not agree with.”\(^\text{17}\)

In other words he wanted to reuse (or *détourne*) everyday commercial signs in a subversive fashion, not as supports for the dominant, capitalist ideology, but in order to expose its repellent underside. Such a politics of everyday, subversive provocation was also carried over into how the audience is made to participate in his spaces: “rather than participation I want to implicate the audience, I want to force the audience to confront my work. . . . I do not want an interactive work. I want to do an active work.”\(^\text{18}\) What follows is an exploration of how the labyrinthine structure, the fragile materials, and the dynamic space constituting Hirschhorn’s 2002 sculpture *Cavemanman* serve his political ambitions to confront the audience and undo the ubiquitous logic of late capitalism associated with a culture of display.\(^\text{19}\)

\(^{16}\) Such a negative or subtractive space might serve to open up what Denis Hollier describes as “some space before the subject, before the institutionalization of subjectivity”—a cut or opening through which a new subject will emerge. Rather than disciplining and performing the subject, Gallizio’s architectural device might “perform spacing,” that is, “a space from before the subject, before meaning: the a-subjective, a-semantic space of an un-edifying architecture” (Hollier, Against Architecture: The Writings of Georges Bataille, trans. Betsy Wing [Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989], pp. x–xi).

\(^{17}\) See James Rondeau and Susanne Ghez, eds., *Jumbo Spoons and Big Cake*, exh. cat. (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago; World Airport; Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, 2000), p. 35.


On November 2, 2002, Hirschhorn’s conversion of the Barbara Gladstone Gallery in New York into a network of caves was opened to the public. The fabrication and contents of these caves mirror a familiar consumer world, with its piles of Coca-Cola cans, foil-wrapped shop dummies, and TV monitors showing scenes from Lascaux II (France’s simulated theme-park version of the original Lascaux caves). However, its overall messy, shambolic, even ruinous appearance, emphasized by the reams of brown packing tape with its Band-Aid effect of barely holding together the precarious, dilapidated caves, works against any whimsical or celebratory pop-kitsch aesthetic. And his appropriation of fluorescent light strips both alludes to and departs from precedents such as Dan Flavin, as noted by Hamza Walker: “Hirschhorn’s use of fluorescent lights shamelessly disgorges Dan Flavin’s utopian aspirations for an industrially produced, commercially available,
pure art” (this purity, of course, relies on the whiteness of the modern gallery) by making explicit “neon’s crass, commercial uses in sites ranging from the most anti-septic shopping mall to the seediest urban nooks and crannies.” This diagnosis fits in with Hirschhorn’s own assertion that he wants “to create something that is unclean, dirty,” where the unsavory is a sign of what is repressed or secreted within a clean, shiny, plastic world.

More specifically, Hirschhorn used such everyday, low-brow (or no-brow) materials as tape, foil, and cardboard to produce an antihierarchical and more democratic mode of display, whose nonedifying structure was intended as a direct critique of the exclusive and intimidating effects of public monuments whose noble materials, such as bronze and marble, worked to seduce, dominate, and intimidate its audience: “my critique of the monument comes from the fact that the idea of the monument is determined, produced, and situated by decisions imposed from above, by those in power . . . a monument always retains something of the demagogic. I want to fight hierarchy, demagogy, this source of power.” This attack is conducted through his use of cheap materials that everyone can recognize and access and which do not intimidate, seduce, or dominate, but instead encourage reflection on his larger critical project to debunk exclusive models of artistic quality. However, this critique of the high by the low is not, I suggest, simply a reversal of the value of materials (a substitution of the high by the low), but also involves a transvaluation of that which is typically regarded as useless, such as brown packing tape. What is usually an outside wrapper is now constitutive of this interior cavity, and what is usually disposed of, overlooked as incidental to the commodity, merely its outer skin, is given a new use value. Rather than wasted, this throwaway stuff is recycled as the material property of a place of refuge; like the cardboard cities of the homeless, its rudimentary means still offer protection. Rubbish is given a restorative function, or rather Hirschhorn excavates the hidden potential (or green alternative) within a consumer economy of waste and abundance.

The notions of excess and accumulation are a central part of Hirschhorn’s work, as indicated by his challenge to Mies van der Rohe’s famous assertion that “less is more” (indicating the desire to strip away all that is superfluous to a building’s efficient, functionalist purpose of design) with his own claim “more is more.” And indeed, Cavemanman is an overwhelmingly dense environment, where objects, images, and texts seem to proliferate beyond control. Hirschhorn has said that he wants to “superinform and superdetail, in order not to inform or detail,” in order not to communicate. As a consequence, James Rondeau suggests that,

21. James Rondeau, “Jumbo Spoons and Big Cake at The Art Institute of Chicago,” Jumbo Spoons and Big Cake, p. 11.
22. Interview between Okwui Enwezor and Thomas Hirschhorn, Jumbo Spoons and Big Cake, p. 28.
23. James Rondeau describes such a position as implicitly recognizing that “information is the most important—yet at the same time, devalued—commodity in our super-saturated global media culture” (Jumbo Spoons,” p. 10).
“unable to process the full range of possible meanings, the viewer is rendered confused, powerless, even mute.” Against Hirschhorn’s own utopian assertion that the abundance of stuff pilfered from different realms (from shops and magazines to academic scholarship) is meant to make his work more accessible because it allows for different entrances by people from different backgrounds, Rondeau’s argument insists that by not privileging any elements, not even the viewer, he risks replicating the homogenizing, selfsame logic of capital itself. The superinformation offered by the plethora of texts stuck all over the walls and ceiling no longer function as communicative dialogue—despite the best efforts of some visitors at the opening of Cavemanman: “‘Here’s chapter four!’ someone shouted, ‘Now, where’s chapter one?’” Instead, these readymade texts, language itself, overwhelm the visitor, making it impossible to add it all up and come to some narrative conclusion. Confronted with this surfeit of text-as-babble, whatever our educational background, we all become illiterate, mute. We have here an immersive environment in which differences dissolve amid a distracted logic that symptomatically mirrors and aestheticizes capitalism’s dispersal of consciousness. Or, perhaps this is a diagnostic strategy of mimicry designed to test the accumulative logic of capital by pushing it to its absurd conclusion, where everything is of equal value and therefore of no value. Yet, out of this ground zero of value the possibility of difference emerges via what Hirschhorn calls the individual’s will to power, understood as a will to make connections between disparate things. That is, “to intellectually, physically, and politically link all of the elements of my project together . . . [often] the links are not there . . . it is up to me to make such connections visual. When I make links between objects with tinfoil . . . these links do not really exist, it is only a will.” These foil conductors create a closed-circuit network between the surfeit of objects, images, text, and video sequences that allows information, meaning, and, by implication, energy to flow within the space in all directions simultaneously. And it is energy and not quality that interests Hirschhorn: “I want to work in a space with fragmentation, broken scales, multiplied angles . . . I am against work of quality, readymades, finished products. I try to work with total energy.” Such a fragmented deregulation of meaning could be read as liberating, as the beginning of an equal distribution of value in the minds of each individual inquirer, or in a more negative light, as the emergence of a pluralistic relativism, where making connections between things is reduced to a game of subjectivist intuition, a form of individualistic entertainment or spectacle. For example, a metaphorical strong light is shone on those objects that literally loom large and stand out among all the trivia and chaotic relations, in particular, the monumental scale of the handmade copies of mass-produced books, including titles by Noam Chomsky, Alain Touraine, and Kurt Weil, on the issues of culture.

24. Ibid.
27. Interview between Okwui Enwezor and Thomas Hirschhorn, Jumbo Spoons and Big Cake, p. 32.
democracy, and equality. The overblown scale of these repositories of ideas on equality and global social justice (echoed in the graffitied mantra “1 man = 1 man” and the clocks showing the times in different spots around the world) works to reprioritize the role of thinking in our global, consumer culture. But how are we to read the foil connections (or ramifications, as Hirschhorn calls them) that link up these big book ideas to the headless, foil-wrapped dummies and what look like explosive devices? On a positive note we could say they symbolize the potential for utopian, socially revolutionary thought to blow apart these unthinking, irrational atrophied bodies. On the other hand, in a vein more akin to J. G. Ballard’s *Crystal World*, the tinfoil umbilici emanating from the plastic mannequins (the mirror image of zombified shoppers lured, as Walter Benjamin says, by the sex appeal of inorganic commodities) could be read as the sculptural equivalents of the actually existing spatiotemporal forms of universal reification, that like a virus colonizes and petrifies all it touches in both public and private (or interior) domains.

Although *Cavemanman* is infiltrated and inspired by our contemporary world (though its low-tech look belies its supposed influence by high-tech Swiss road tunnels), it also recognizes its Platonic or philosophical heritage. This is made explicit in Hirschhorn’s preparatory statement sent to the Barbara Gladstone Gallery, which sets out its narrative context: “the caves have been the home to a reclusive philosopher who has withdrawn from the outside world in order to confront his all-consuming preoccupation with the achievement of equality between all human beings, all over the world.”28 Such a philosophical desire to retreat from the distracting conditions of the world, into some space situated outside of it, indicates an idealist belief that some free space, not contaminated by the conditions of the world, actually exists. However, unlike other philosophical precedents of worldly

withdrawal, such as Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, who sought sanctuary from the world in a cave (and where the return to “nature” signified some sort of material exemption from the messy contingencies of everyday commercial life), Hirschhorn’s philosopher finds himself in an excessively cluttered, artificial space, infiltrated by the trappings and debris of a consumer culture; in short, a junk space. Therefore, in an explicit reversal of the Platonic tradition, the process of thinking here is shown not to be excluded from the world, or rather the conceptual realm is no longer located beyond or above the world of appearances and everyday phenomena. Here, knowledge gets dirty and becomes an archaeological process of rummaging about in the material residue of everyday life. By planting this philosopher firmly within the material conditions of existence, he reveals the impossibility of cutting thought off from the world. Instead, or so I argue, he exposes reflection as an activity intertwined with its context, produced in and by a subject embedded in its world. Perhaps this is why the philosopher has abandoned this cave, or rather why Hirschhorn has chosen to banish the philosopher, because there is no place for isolated thinking exempted from the world.

Despite this stress on the connectedness of critical reflection with the world, Hirschhorn paradoxically claims that *Cavemanman* is not site specific. The sculptural display may be adapted to fit a site, but its concept, as idea, is mentally nomadic. The work/idea is connected to its location but not to the exclusion of possible future sites elsewhere. For Hirschhorn the site is “a variable not a target,” merely a controllable setting in which to test an open-ended work. This would suggest that the obvious resonance of a cave construction within a New York gallery after September 11 with the recent discovery of Al Qaeda’s subterranean complex was merely accidental or irrelevant—an arbitrary connection caused by the

29. Ibid., p. 114.
aleatory will-to-fix of the visitors. But for Hirschhorn it is important that the process of inquiry that his works stimulate is open-ended and he should thus refrain from giving singular or didactic messages. So although Cavemanman may appear to undertake a sort of dig that excavates the lost history of political commitment within our present-day reality of global social injustices—ideals abandoned by the philosopher and taken up by the artist (as indicated by his blown-up books dedicated to utopian social transformations)—this reading is not certain. As with all utopian, revolutionary projects, it is fraught and precarious, as indicated by the fragility of its disintegrating materials and by the fact that this too is a temporary and itinerant sculpture. But such material and temporal precariousness is suited to his task of making works that are places of passage: “art is always movement. . . . I hate forms and formalisms that wish to impose themselves on us as something fixed, stable, immutable.” It is the fragility of his forms and the instability of the messages they provoke that give the lie to what Hirschhorn calls the “myth of stability.”

By way of a brief conclusion we can say that a cave, literally defined, is a hollow or cavity within a solid body. As a void the cave represents a nonplace, and as a model for a subject it presents one full of holes. But to build a cave, to dig underground, points to a process that aims at excavating what lies beneath the ossified surface, to probe in order to liberate and reveal secret or repressed realities—be they lost thoughts or derelict utopian dreams, as in Hirschhorn’s abandoned philosopher’s cave, or the as-yet-to-be discovered ways of being in the world indicated by Gallizio’s ambition of constructing a “provisional reality” premised on the collapse or ruination of the Old World Order. It is my contention that at stake in both artists’ cave-building projects is a living archaeology that has both regressive and utopian tendencies. The desire to tunnel can point to a nostalgic retreat or denial of the conditions of the present, but can also indicate a way to use the archaic or outmoded as a way out of the impasse of a present crisis, through a process of immanent excavation. Of course, it may seem that compared to the processes of conventional archaeology, which is understood as a discipline that traces a genealogy of the past within the present through the excavation of actual archaic artifacts, these two phantasmatic digs, with their artificial and constructed artifacts, appear as superficial dramatizations or parodies of archaeology. But perhaps there is also a way in which the art caves of Gallizio and Hirschhorn still perform archaeology in a profound sense: as excavations of fundamental structuring principles (or archē) denied or repressed in and by the present, but on which the present is built: for example, tracing and exposing the hidden roots of the prevailing conditions of the gallery, capitalism, or architecture and its modern inhabitants. So, perhaps, as compared to what we know as conventional archaeology, Gallizio and Hirschhorn present us with what we should think of as an art of archaeology.

30. Michael Wilson also describes Hirschhorn’s delight in discovering the story of an Ecuadoran immigrant found living in the equally man-made caves of Central Park in Upper Manhattan, while setting up Cavemanman (ibid., p. 113).
31. Interview between Okwui Enwezor and Thomas Hirschhorn, Jumbo Spoons and Big Cake, p. 34.