



## Between Movement and Position: Tracking and Its Landscapes of Readiness

Jordan Crandall

I am sitting in a hot hotel lobby, hoping to catch up on email. Next to me are a woman and a man, huddled together, peering intently at their laptop. The woman is speaking to the man and clicking away with forceful pushing motions, causing the computer, perched on her knees, to sway perilously. She is ‘flying’ the computer like a fighter pilot. I listen intently to what she is saying.

On all fronts, she says, she has to constantly battle interruptions. She employs a research technique that is designed to ‘cut through the clutter’ and save time. To quickly find relevant material, she simply types in phrases in Google and then scans the web, telescoping in and out as necessary, zeroing in on the bits and pieces that she needs.

After typing and clicking furiously, the woman suddenly pauses for a moment and sits back, as if to catch her breath. She glances at her companion and grabs a pencil for emphasis. According to her, she says, this search-and-target method allows the pinpointing of relevant content with greater exactitude. ‘It’s more pre-*CISE*,’ she emphasizes, thrusting the sharp end of her pencil toward the computer screen as if it were a missile honing in on its target. Drawing out the sound of the ‘sssss,’ she seems to propel the pencil forward with the force of her enunciation, as if it could puncture the computer screen itself – or rather, the abstracting field of language – to apprehend her Real quarry.

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This is one of the forms that reading takes at the close of the year 2005. One could see it as an effort to reach beyond language, tap into its technological support, or directly connect to the material and affective reality to which it refers. One could see it as part of a larger drive to augment and automate human capabilities; to develop new human-machine composites; and to eliminate gaps between symbol and event. What form of analysis is appropriate to it? Semiotic analyses fall short, because they seldom account for the technological vehicles that *drive* acts of viewing. Such an act of viewing is always produced through the machinic capacities of a time: a machine capacity that can no longer be ignored, especially as viewing becomes increasingly machine-enabled.

Perceptual activity belongs to the individual body, yet it belongs as well to our technologies, which provide its conditions of emergence.

Above all, this machine-enabled perception is driven by the relentless time pressures that have always defined the modern era. It is driven by the need to eliminate time and space intervals. To cut through the clutter. It aims to reduce the intervals between detection, analysis, and engagement, or desire and its attainment, in order to arrive at a real-time perceptual agency. Such a real-time agency is one in which multiple actors, both human and machinic, are connected through high-speed networks and able to act in concert. This is the motor of military history and much else.



Jussi Niva, from the series *Bow*, 2005, oil on board, 85 x 122 cm. Photo by Jussi Tiainen.

In such a landscape, one could say that cooperation reigns. We're all in this together, after all, building the utopian dream of the global village, the wired world, the global brain. And yet: competition plays an equal, if not more primary role. We don't necessarily want to see on a level playing field alongside everyone else. We need to see faster, better, and more precisely – whether in the name of convenience, profit, or protection – in order to outwit competitor and combatant alike. Even though we seldom acknowledge it, we are driven equally by such acquisitive and aggressive impulses. They derive from the production demands of both consumerism and warfare – to the extent that these become mutually reinforcing components of the same economic engine. The engine is also a subjective and somatic one. *When, in a competitive, real-time consumer-security culture, machine-aided perception moves toward the strategic, the panoptic, and the pre-emptive, then we no longer see but track.*

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Tracking arises as a dominant perceptual activity in a computerized culture where *looking has come to mean calculating* rather than visualizing in the traditional sense<sup>1</sup> and where seeing is infused with the logics of tactics and maneuver – whether in the mode of acquisition or defense. When we track, we aim to detect, process, and strategically codify a moving phenomenon – a stock price, a biological function, an enemy, a consumer good – in order to gain advantage in a competitive theater, whether the battlefield, the social arena, or the marketplace. In an accelerated culture of shrinking space and time intervals, tracking promises an increased capacity to see the future. Leapfrogging the expanding present, it offers up a predictive knowledge-power: a competitive edge. It promises to endow us with the ability to outmaneuver our adversaries, to intercept our objects of suspicion and desire.

To track is to endeavor to account for a moving object – which could be one's self, since we track our own activities and rhythms – in evermore precise terms so as to control or manage it, lest it become unruly, wasteful, dangerous, or unattainable as property. When the suspicious and acquisitive eye tracks its objects, it fixes its sights on them as targets to be managed, eliminated, or consumed.

While tracking is fundamentally about the detection and strategic codification of movement, it is at the same time a reaffirmation of precise categorical location, whether in terms of geography or identity. It is about a semiotics of mobility, yet is also a reassertion of temporal and locational specificity – studying how something moves in order to predict its exact position in time and space. It signifies the dynamic between position and movement-flow – what we might call *inclination-position*. Based on my previous patterns of writing and the literary conventions that it follows, I am likely to write three more sentences in this paragraph. Based on previous patterns of key strokes, I am likely to take a break at 3:10. The tracked object may be THERE, but it is moving like THIS and will be in THIS future position at THIS future moment. This is a landscape in which *signifiers have become statistics*.

It is how computers think, and how we begin to think with them.

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Tracking emerged out of the midcentury demands of war and production.<sup>2</sup> It emerged through the development of computing, the wartime sciences of information theory and cybernetics, and the development of structuralism. It helped to generate a semiotics of war and a wartime subjectivity. It coalesced out of a fear of the enemy Other, and

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1 Lars Spuybroek, cited in Hansen, M.B.N. (2004) *New Philosophy for New Media*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 123.

2 One could begin with the development of radar during World War II, or even much earlier. But my emphasis is on computer-enabled tracking.

helped bring a modality of both friend and enemy into being.<sup>3</sup> Its first manifestation was the military command, control, and communications system known as SAGE.

This was a system that automatically processed digitally encoded radar data generated by linked installations around the perimeter of the U.S., and integrated it with information derived from analog communications, weather, and other military data. Abstract information about position and movement was integrated with geographic data and superimposed upon schematic maps. Each SAGE control center tracked all aircraft in its sector and could automatically direct jets to intercept hostile incoming objects.

Within the matrices of SAGE, tracking emerged as a form of machine-aided, calculated seeing, studying movements of objects in order to prepare for their possible interception. It was a vigilant seeing accompanied by a demand for 'preparedness,' both in terms of one's own body and the collective machine-body of the military: an individual and collective alertness on the 'edge' of action. An analytical perception combined with an incipient mobilization. SAGE created demands for new patterns of organization, vigilance, and action: new modes of awareness and perceptual activity that could enframe and make sense of the volumes of abstract information that were suddenly at hand. It created new landscapes of preparedness, which traversed individual body, nation, and culture alike. We are not only speaking of a technology, then, but of a subjectifying and socializing technique, which impacts on language as well as the entire sensorium of the body.

According to Paul Edwards, SAGE was an archetypal 'closed world' system. From within its isolated confines, abstract images of the world were generated on banks of computers, managed through the control orientations that the technologies helped set in place. The systematic, logical rules of computing helped produce the sense that everything – warfare, ground realities, markets – could be formalized, modeled, and managed. Reality was figured as mathematical and 'capturable' through a formal programming logic. The world became a predictable, manipulable entity, and the future something that could be dominated.<sup>4</sup>

Such an orientation carries over into popular media, where the spectator is infused with an artificial sense of control over the machine and an exterior world represented on the screen. Reality is subsumed within the dictates of the interface. An unruly or unproductive situation is dominated, over and through the technology, and a de facto power relation is established between observer and observed. Moving through a world of information and communications technology, information is increasingly seen as more essential than that which it represents. Pattern is privileged over presence.<sup>5</sup> The history of structuralism is part of this technical-discursive ensemble: an orientation

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3 Galison, P. (1994) 'The Ontology of the Enemy: Norbert Weiner and the Cybernetic Vision,' *Critical Inquiry*, 21(1): 228-266. See also Galison, P. (2001) 'War Against the Center,' *Grey Room*, 4 (Summer): 6-33.

4 Edwards, P.N. (1996) *The Closed World: Computers and the Politics of Discourse in Cold War America*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1-15

5 Hayles, K. (1999) *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 19.

where reality began to be seen as determined by linguistic codes, and attention turned to the codes and conventions that produce meaning.

Such orientations of control are not produced by computing, but develop in conjunction with it: as computing creates the technological possibility of war, so war shapes computing. Technologies are always clusters of tools, procedures, and metaphors, functioning at the level of language, materiality, and belief.<sup>6</sup> As Guattari would point out, information and communication machines do not merely convey representational contents, but contribute to the development of new assemblages of enunciation.<sup>7</sup> A 'technoscientific semiotics' becomes stored in the operational strata of organization and practice.<sup>8</sup>

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One could suggest three intersecting areas, descending from this wartime technical-discursive ensemble, that are bundled into tracking from the start. *First*, the perpetuation of an idealist orientation where humans have no access to unmediated reality and the world is actively constructed in terms of relational information systems. Here the world is scripted as inherently controllable, filtered through a scrim of information that modifies both system and materiality. *Second*, following from the first, is an emphasis on data patterns over essence: an evergreater abstraction of persons, bodies, and things, and an emphasis on statistical patterns of behavior, where the populace is pictured as a calculus of probability distributions and manageable functions. *Third*, a fundamentally agonistic orientation, deriving from a world built on confrontation and oppositional tactics, of tactical moves and countermoves.

SAGE unleashed a wave of command-control projects, which eventually formed the core of an emerging worldwide satellite, sensor, and communications web geared for panoptic global oversight and instantaneous military response.<sup>9</sup> Contemporary descendents of this system – 'networkcentric' or 'next generation' warfare systems – aim to link sensors, weapons, communications systems, commanders, and soldiers into one giant computing grid, offering a comprehensive picture of the battlefield that can be viewed and acted upon collaboratively in real time.

Today the military traffics in panoptic visualization ideals. Plans are underway for the development of a 'Global Information Grid' – a secure, wireless network that will fuse US military and intelligence services into one unified system, making volumes of information available instantly to all military and intelligence actors. Proponents of this 'war net' say that it will change the military and warfare the way that the Internet changed business and culture. The consortium established to build it includes a who's who of military contractors and technology innovators. According to the chief executive of Lockheed Martin, one of its primary partners, this system will allow every member of

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6 Edwards, *op. cit.*

7 Guattari, F. (1992) 'Regimes, Pathways, Subjects,' in Cray and Kwinter (eds.) *Incorporations*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 18.

8 Guattari, F. (2000) *The Three Ecologies*. London: Athlone Press, 48.

9 Edwards, *op. cit.*, 75-111.

the military to have ‘a God’s eye view’ of the battlefield.<sup>10</sup> Tracking orientations are always entangled in beliefs and mindsets. In 1997, the Chief of Staff of the US Air Force predicted that by the year 2000, “we shall be capable of finding, tracking, and targeting virtually in real time any significant element moving on the face of the earth.”<sup>11</sup> Tracking as the ultimate panoptic ideal, propelled by a sense of divine right, could not be more explicitly stated.

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Such a paradigm involves erasing the distinctions between media,<sup>12</sup> between agencies, and even between rhetorical forms.



Jussi Niva, *Twist - Blue*, 2005, oil on board, 122 x 153 cm. Photo by Jussi Tiainen.

Tracking generates abstract data that must be filtered through new forms of computer-aided visualization, oriented toward the viewers who must interpret and act on it. These graphic systems have not developed in isolation: they have developed in conjunction

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10 ‘A Network of Warfighters to Do Battle in 21st Century Conflicts,’ New York (AFP) Nov 13, 2004, from SpaceDaily.com, 15 Nov 2004. Thanks to Irving Goh for this forward.

11 General Fogelman, speaking to the House of Representatives, cited by Virilio, P. (2000) *Strategy of Deception*. London: Verso, 17-18, from an article by F. Filloux entitled ‘Le Pentagone la tête dans les étoiles’ in *Liberation*, 20 April 1999.

12 Kittler, F. (1999) *Grammophon, Film, Typewriter*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1-2.

with popular news and entertainment media. There is a constant flow between these media as well as across the divisions between military and civilian. Tracking has been integrated into a wide-ranging culture of spectacle. It is an assemblage of enunciation that no longer heeds media distinctions, or civilian-military divides.

To understand tracking, then, we are compelled to look at *the combination of media forms and agencies* that it produces and registers. For quite obviously, tracking has been integrated into a regime of networked spectacle. It plays out across all manner of visual and rhythmic media, whether used for entertainment, communication, or locationing, by the military, policing, or civilian sectors. There is nothing outside of this system, and especially as it is increasingly able to tap into the affective dimension, where danger is eroticized. It produces a subject who is prepared for both disaster and desire, as both are subsumed into a larger cosmos of affective stimulation: a citizen indoctrinated to ‘be ready,’ in both a physical and cognitive sense, for any call to action.

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According to Virilio, the real-time interface has replaced the interval that once constituted and organized the history and geography of human societies. Problems of spatial distance have been supplanted with problems of the time remaining.<sup>13</sup> One could say that tracking was motored by the need for an instantaneity of action, where time delays, spatial distances, and ‘middlemen’ are reduced through computational systems that facilitate the sharing of human and machinic functions.

A new form of agency emerges within this coordination and command network, spanning spatial distance and merging information from multiple sources. A combinatory field of perception arises within a distributed field of shared functions. This is not something that is particular to the military: it operates across the board in a generalized and extended condition of visibility that has been called a ‘machinic vision’ – a condition where all perception necessarily passes through a technological circuit, and thereby emerges in a shared space between human and machines. In the most extreme case, which we find in the ideal of fully automated vision, the human can be left out of the loop.<sup>14</sup> However, the human is never replaced by technology but continually co-evolves with it, modifying itself in response to technological change.

As Ryan Bishop suggests, the integrative history of military technology – a history of prosthetic extension, especially that of sight – has been paralleled by the rise of mass media and its manipulation of vision to create illusions of simultaneity, movement, presence, and depth. Not only are instruments designed to collapse distance and time, but they aim to close the gap between the perceiving subject and the visible world. In this sense they are haunted by the fundamental problems of representation, which concern the illusory correspondence between model and reality and the impossibility of

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13 Virilio, P. (1997) *Open Sky*, trans. J. Rose. London: Verso, 10, 19, 30.

14 John Johnston, cited in Hansen, *op. cit.*, 99.

eliminating the referential gap. This problem is not confronted – rather, a return to a mythologized time of unproblematic perception is substituted.<sup>15</sup>

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Abstract strategy games were always necessary for testing military operations and tactics. During the Cold War, increasingly powerful modeling and prediction technologies were needed in order to reach into the future and anticipate events. They were of vital importance since actual outcomes were too catastrophic to consider. Simulation was actively used in contrast to actual weapon technology that could not be used. Predictive simulations aimed to see the future through sophisticated scenario-planning techniques. They fueled an orientation of pre-emptive seeing: a form of vision that was always slightly ahead of itself, which not only anticipated probable events but, in some corner of the imaginary, seemed to mold reality to fit the simulated outcome. Simulated worlds paralleled real worlds, and beliefs about each were reflected in both. To be prepared was to anticipate the worst, and the worst could only be modeled. Once modeled, it is introduced into reality.

In a sense, there exists a probable construct – a kind of idealized scenario – that stands in relation to reality as its *tendency*. It configures as a statistical inclination, which hovers like an ideal form awaiting a reality that will fill it. It becomes a silhouette that models future positions, a ghostly forebear into which reality ‘snaps.’ The DARPA ‘futures market’ – a system whereby investors could bet on the probable occurrence of eruptive global events, with the idea that such markets could anticipate actual situations – was an outcome of this predictive formalism, as is the ideology of pre-emptive war itself.

To speak of pre-emptive simulation in this way is to speak of the formation of a disaster imaginary, which traffics across the worlds of fact and fiction, promiscuously borrowing its parts and depositing them across a wide range of cultural phenomena. Preparedness became something that could only be accomplished by way of simulation. Assumptions, beliefs, and mind-sets arise out of the technical-semiotic machinery of simulations as they are practiced, as such orientations in turn get embedded in its operational strata. Through these a subject is trained in new forms of movement, combat, and identification.

As simulations flow back and forth across the commercial sector, in various combinations of serious use, entertainment, recruitment, promotion, and proprietary engagement, perhaps ‘simulation’ is becoming less a modality of representation than a mechanism of translation – or at least, a form of incipience or potentiality, moving across various stages of enaction. In new training scenarios, live units are connected to simulation units, allowing a switching back and forth between virtual and real situations – a process that will have analogues in the civilian realm.

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15 Bishop, R. and J. Phillips (2002) ‘Sighted Weapons and Modernist Opacity: Aesthetics, Poetics, Prosthetics,’ *Boundary 2*, 29(2): 158-159.

We are here in the territory of what John Armitage, after Virilio, calls the “logistics of perception management”<sup>16</sup> – the realm of spin and ‘reality control,’ where facts, interpretations, and events are mutually shaped to conform to strategic doctrines; where reality is positioned as something that is inherently pliable; and where the public becomes a surface for the production of effects.

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Fundamental contradictions remain. With the seemingly boundless opportunity, safety, and convenience that comes with tracking technologies and their assemblages, their user is increasingly able to be targeted and managed within new control regimes – a mobile focal point of a distributed Panopticon. At the same time that individuals are objects of a controlling gaze, they are also able to mold and ‘perform’ their visibility, identity, and connectivity within new social networks, in a reverse panoptics of pleasure.

In media-saturated societies, surveillance has gradually been made ‘friendly’ and transformed into spectacle, to the extent that it is no longer a condition to be feared. Rather, it is a condition to be courted: witness the phenomena of reality television, blogs, friendship networks, and webcams, and the rise of the media mise-en-scene as the primary form of social authentication.<sup>17</sup> This ‘friendly’ control can be regarded as self-regulating: we are an integral part of systems that self-adjust through market dynamics or adaptive behaviors, allowing for the emergence of new forms of maneuver and masquerade. Within new ecologies of mind, we benefit from machine-human interactions all around us, a pervasive web of shared resources that offers boundless opportunity for identity refashioning. Further: in a database-driven culture of accounting, one needs to appear on the matrices of registration in order to ‘count.’ To be accounted for is to exist.

New technologies of production aim to narrow the intervals between conception, manufacturing, distribution, and consumption. Aiming toward instantaneity in shopping and media-entertainment development, they shrink the delays between detecting an audience pattern and formatting a new enticement that can address it. These technologies and their discourses aim to increase productivity, agility, and awareness, yet they vastly increase the tracking capabilities of marketing and management regimes. You are able to get what you want faster, but your behavior is tracked and analyzed by marketers who also can provide this information to police and military sources, who increasingly depend upon the business sector for a large part of their intelligence.

After the Civil War, the U.S. military was prohibited from future interventions into the domestic realm. Since most spy satellites are owned by the military, the military outsources some of its domestic intelligence needs to commercial satellite providers,

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16 Armitage, J. (2004) ‘Beyond Postmodernism? Paul Virilio’s Hypermodern Cultural Theory,’ in A. and M. Kroker (eds.) *Life in the Wires: The CTHEORY Reader*. CTHEORY Books, 354-368. See Virilio, P. (1989) *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception*, trans. P. Camiller. London: Verso.

17 See Weibel, P. (2002) ‘Pleasure and the Panoptic Principle,’ and Frohne, U. ‘Screen Tests: Media Narcissism, Theatricality, and the Internalized Observer,’ in T. Levin, U. Frohne and P. Weibel (eds.) *[CTRL]SPACE: Rhetorics of Surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 215-219; 253-77.

while relying on data gathered through the private sector on a number of fronts, especially to meet the sudden growth in intelligence demands after 9/11. Information from buying habits, travel locations, and audience demographics can be integrated into one comprehensive system, which aims to target consumers at the one-to-one level, offering individually-tailored enticements. Tracked, the user becomes a target within the operational interfaces of the marketing worlds, into whose technologies state surveillance is outsourced.



Jussi Niva, *Twist - Yellow*, 2005, oil on board, 122 x 130 cm. Photo by Jussi Tiainen.

We internalize conditions of surveillance and tracking. They enter into the logic of perception. We are both origin and object: the one who tracks and who keeps track. These conduits are not particular to the domain of policing, for they not only compel a watchfulness of the state, but a civilian watchfulness, where a suspicious or concerned eye is cast upon one's self and one's fellow citizens. Think of the way that one is compelled to assume a position of extreme vigilance – to 'track' or scan rather than simply see – in the reporting of 'suspicious activity' at an airport. Looking for such 'suspicious activity,' I suddenly realize the most insidious part of the drill: What about *me*? With this realization, I am transformed. I am the person at Sartre's keyhole, caught

in the act, who knows that he is seen at the moment that he sees. I have now become an object for the gaze of another. Looked at, I look at myself. Concerned that I could be 'suspect,' I modify my actions accordingly.

If tracking moves toward an instantaneity of action – eliminating time and space intervals and connecting multiple actors, human or not, as if they were one – then in the extreme case, as Virilio would have it, this real time arena is one in which 'coincidence' takes the place of communication,<sup>18</sup> and the emphasis shifts from the "standardization of public opinion" to the "synchronization of public emotion."<sup>19</sup> In a real time world where there is less and less *time* to act, or where action plays out in barely measurable fractions of seconds, interpretive attention must turn to the realm of the micro – those semi-'interior' states that accumulate at the border of action, just under the horizon of visibility. This is the realm not of visible action, but of a *disposition* to act, or a certain readiness to act. It is the realm of the affective. It is a domain of contradictions, where scopophilic pleasures and surveillant anxieties cohabit, irresolvable within the scrim of representation. For we are not only talking of meaning but of *motivating power*. Affective intensities are deeper than semantics.

This is primarily a non-discursive activity, which does not function through linguistic mediation but as a direct stimulation of the body, as one finds in athletic training, and as such is engaged in qualities of movement or rhythm over calculi of symbolic positioning.

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According to Deleuze, affect fills the interval between perception and action. It is a modality of perception that ceases to yield an action and instead brings forth an expression. It is not about movement, but rather the quality of a lived interior state, which marks a pure coincidence between subject and object. It is a movement that is not engaged outwardly but absorbed inwardly – a tendency or interior effort that halts just this side of doing. It is about how one experiences oneself as oneself, or senses oneself from the inside.<sup>20</sup> It is the perception of one's own aliveness, vitality, and changeability, which can be sensed as 'freedom'<sup>21</sup> – the body's sense of the aliveness of a situation, which also moves across the intercorporeal world.<sup>22</sup> It is about the incorporealization of information, not its representation: a corporeal 'thinking' that is preconscious and pre-active, and which does not resolve to a statement.

As Nigel Thrift suggests, this is a site that has become increasingly analyzable and explicitly political through practices and techniques that are aimed at it specifically.<sup>23</sup> It has become measurable through new technologies of tracking and filtering that are able

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18 Virilio, *[CTRL]SPACE*, 112.

19 Virilio, P. (2005) 'Cold Panic,' *Cultural Politics*, 1(1): 29.

20 Hansen, *op. cit.*, 134-135.

21 Brian Massumi, cited in Thrift, N. (2004) 'Intensities of Feeling: Towards a Spatial Politics of Affect,' *Geografiska Annaler*, 86 B, 61.

22 Thrift, *op. cit.*

23 Thrift, *op. cit.*, 65.

to probe into the intimate and nearly instantaneous states of bodily movement, orientation, disposition, mood, arrayed as calculations, statistics, and simulations, cross-referenced with databased records of consumer or citizen behavior: a newly constituted body of measurable states and functions, whose *inclinations to act* are quantifiable and understood as predictable.

According to John Armitage, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's 'Be Ready' campaign operates on this space of imminent mobility. The 'readiness' it promotes has no real object, and is simply perpetuated in a kind of self-generating machine. Yet it is a profoundly operational space, where the individualized 'desire for mobility' – the consumerist impulse – is recoded and displaced onto the theaters of embodied threat.<sup>24</sup> Desire and fear cohabit here at the threshold of action, as such concepts as 'freedom' do double duty, promoting a freedom of mobility as well as a sense of freedom that can only result from 'defending our way of life' – that is, the right to own and consume. Buying, then, functions as both pleasure and defense: a form of bodily and social enhancement, and a form of defense against that which would threaten it.



Jussi Niva, *Twist - Green*, 2005, oil on board, 122 x 160 cm. Photo by Jussi Tiainen.

This is an interlocking mechanism of acquisition and defense that becomes the very condition of mobility – a 'freedom of mobility' that is about defending the right to own

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24 Armitage, J. (2003) 'On Ernst Juenger's "Total Mobilization": A Re-Evaluation in the Era of the War on Terrorism,' *Body & Society*, 9(4): 204.

and circulate objects, to constitute oneself as an object to be marketed, to defend these objects from harm, and to forge new pathways within unruly, 'dangerous,' or adventurous market territory. It is a process of defining the self in terms of an unbounded menagerie of attractions and fears, which leaves it forever lacking. Through an interlocking mechanism of selling and consuming, looking and buying, acquiring and defending, one grazes along endless arrays of enticements offered up for the desirous and protective eye – enticements that are aimed at the replication of desire in the eyes of others, or of drawing the groundlines of defense. What is needed in order to address this landscape is, following Foucault, Agamben, and Thrift, not only a biopolitics but a *microbiopolitics*.<sup>25</sup>

If new technologies of networking, speed, and tracking have opened up this site of the micro – an affective space-time of bodily awareness, disposition, and readiness – then this is a space that can be politicized. The state of 'readiness' opens up a new site of operations in the intervals between perception and action. We can define it as a condition of heightened awareness and alertness, where the vigilant and optimized machinebody is roused and poised to act. In this state, one is not only cognitively but affectively engaged. Through the scrim of readiness, we can understand tracking as characterized by a shift toward real-time engagements and continuous, heightened states of alertness and preparedness in such a way as to generate an embodied state of receptivity for both conflict and libidinous consumption. It produces the body as a receptive site for both fears and attractions, and thereby integrates combat and commodity. It functions as a hinge between war and consumerism.

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To enter this domain is to acknowledge the circuits of intensity that traffic under the symbolic register, continually confounding politics of representation. It is to enter the domain of contradictions, where violence can be both horrific and pleasurable, and where surveillance can be voyeurism: a realm where one secretly thrills to the potential spectacle of crime, and where danger is not only avoided but also secretly courted. This is the realm of the disaster imaginary and the criminal unconscious, played out in the 'adventure factor' in military recruitment advertisements, immersive games, and extreme sports. It manifests in the 'morbid curiosity' we feel when, present in the aftermath of a violent act, we have to look, but we don't want to see. It requires the acknowledgement of danger as a constitutive element of attraction: the unpredictable, dangerous web of intrigue that pulls us into the narrative world.

Here we are also in the dimension of the Lacanian Real: the hidden fantasmatic underside of our sense of reality, which cannot be assimilated into the symbolic order of language or into the domain of shared images. It provides the fundamental support of reality, yet it cannot be incorporated into it. It results in the construction of sublime

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25 Thrift, *op. cit.*, 69.

objects – impossible-real objects of desire – or simply in the *jouissance* one feels in the face of the catastrophe.<sup>26</sup>

Tracking is the result of a machine-aided process of disciplinary attentiveness, embodied in practice, and bound up with the demands of a new production and security regime<sup>27</sup> – yet it is not repressive in a disciplinary sense, but also ‘excessive’,<sup>28</sup> and thus spills over any conception of disciplinary power. In the end, the workings of tracking – born of a formal programming logic, of the primacy of pattern over presence, and of the agonistic calculus of tactics and manoeuvre – cannot be understood by formal linguistic meanings alone. It requires a vocabulary in which the limits of logical reasoning and ideology are recognized.

**the author**

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<http://jordancrandall.com>

**the artist**

Jussi Niva (born 1966) lives and works in Helsinki. Niva’s principal medium is painting. His massive and intensive oils from the series *Twist* have a strong dynamic character. The movements of the brush are easy to sense on the board. Niva’s artistic point of view lies somewhere between the abstract and the figurative. The figurative elements suggesting the landscape are still present, but the landscape has lost most of its familiarity and recognisable character. Niva’s paintings are like fast glimpses of the surroundings, caught through the window of a fast moving car or other vehicle. With sufficient speed, the passing familiar landscape turns into an abstract view with stunning, bright colours and formal elements.

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26 Lacan, J. (1978) *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. A. Sheridan. W.W. Norton. See also Žižek, S. (2002) *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*. London: Verso.

27 Crary, J. (1999) *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

28 J. McKenzie, cited in Thrift, p. 64.