

Mille Gilles
(A Thousand Gilles)

A film by Ijsbrand van Veelen

Philosophy is no longer a synthetic judgment; it is like a thought synthesizer functioning to make thought travel, make it mobile, make it a force of the Cosmos (in the same way as one makes sound travel). (*A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 343)

Gilles Deleuze: schizoanalyst, pragmaticist, materialist, philosopher of flux and becoming. Deleuze strove to break the tradition of theorizing about the world as if from an outside point of view, treating theory instead as a material act that takes place within the world. Deleuze was not so interested in describing change as effecting it, diving in to dissolve stasis into flux. “The schizoanalyst is not an interpreter,” he insisted with Félix Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus*, “...he is a mechanic, a micromechanic” (p. 338). Deleuze’s creative philosophy, then, rather than supporting the repetitious project of re-presenting the world over and over again, sought to cut across and break apart what has sedimented in order to produce new openings and directions for becoming. His work is a productive experiment, designed to effectively bring about change.

Just as he did not want to reproduce what has already been said, Deleuze did not want his readers taking up his work as a metaphysical statement about the world. He viewed what he produced as a map rather than a tracing. A tracing merely repeats what has been done. A map, on the other hand, “can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation. It can be drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a meditation” (*A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 12). He urged his readers to use his maps in order to experiment and create, rather than to imitate or represent. *Mille Gilles* is one record of such creative efforts, presenting the work of some of those who make Deleuze’s work and ideas central to their projects.

Van Veelen weaves together (sometimes distractingly so) interviews with architects, musicians, artists, and a management advisor in order to illustrate some pivotal Deleuzian themes: Multiplicity, Becoming, the Rhizome, the Fold, and the Nomad. But more interesting than their explication of these ideas, which often lack the “anexact yet rigorous” quality Deleuze is known for, is the way these professionals embody them in their creative experiments. Greg Lynn, for example, explains how an architect can bring becoming, flux, and movement into a building without actually using moving parts. He or she builds a slightly sloping floor that will shape the way

one walks across it. The motion, then, is virtual, actualized only in the relationship between the structure and the person using it. Thus rather than simply allowing a subject to move through an objective space, the person and building deterritorialize and become each other. David Shea and DJ Spooky favor multiplicity, combining heterogeneous musical structures and elements of sound to create new songs. They point out that their fragmented DJ culture is as timely as Deleuze, relevant as the artificial divisions between different media and fall away at the turn of the 21st century. Bernard Cache designs furniture rhizomatically by using a machinic formula with varying parameters so that each piece is different yet dynamically related. Instead of simply reproducing an original static form or design, he produces ten thousand custom made yet mass-produced chairs. Perhaps most fascinating is the way Jules Koster describes modern corporate organizations in a way that cuts across hierarchical systems, bringing into play as part of the machine the sidewalk outside a store and advertising on the internet. Like Shea and Spooky, Koster finds Deleuze quite appropriate to describe the current state of the world in flux as globalization changes the face of business.

The film refreshingly closes with an ethical issue we often see passed over in deconstructive presentations. While Deleuze encouraged us to experiment and plunder and break open, he did not think that therefore anything should go or that chaos should reign. Not all heterogeneous elements fit together; nor should they be forced. There is no clear plan for the flux. What fits? What is appropriate? These are crucial questions for those who would become schizoanalysts.

In the end, one wonders if Deleuze would be satisfied with what has been done with his work. Have these professionals taken up Deleuze's work creatively to act in and transform the world, or do they fall back into representational expressions of his ideas? Lars Spuybroek seems quite successful with his Water Pavillion, a building that takes away any reference to an external horizon and uses lighting, sound, and physical structure to force the people inside to become more fluid. On the other hand, Lydia Dona's machinic paintings, which incorporate images from automotive manuals, are questionable in their pragmatic effect. Do they cut across old assemblages, moving, changing, or becoming the viewer and forcing the viewer to become them? Or do they simply represent to the subject Deleuze's notions of the machinic flux, thereby perpetuating and reinforcing both preexisting structures? Lastly, van Veelen's own editing style, while suggesting nonlinearity, remains representational.

Still, van Veelen gives us an interesting glimpse of Deleuze as he is being taken up outside of the world of academic philosophy. While not a clear introduction to Deleuze's thought, we see how his work is taken up with greater or lesser pragmatic success. This was Deleuze's hope as a materialist, that his work would have a transformative effect in the world. Of course, he could not control what this would become. He could only act, experiment, initiate becoming. This is the nature of the

rhizome as a line of creative flight, that it is a taking off point. The fragility of this material theorizing is made clear in the only actual footage of Deleuze in the film, where he says at a conference: “As soon as the words of this statement hang in the air, its subject sinks into the earth. What can it be?”