**Topology: Spaces of Transformation Edges of the World**

**Saturday 21 January 2012, 14.00–16.30**

Artist **Ernesto Neto** in conversation with physicist **Luiz Alberto Oliveira**, science writer and curator **Margaret Wertheim** and philosopher **Éric Alliez**.

The participants in this panel experiment with intensive forces of philosophy, art, physics and cosmology, opening affirmative spaces of becoming imperceptible and porous to the outside. These experiments express different topological modes that can be understood as immersion in multiple, complex processes of transformation and flux.

‘Culture separates, bodies unify. How can we on a fragmented cultural planet, topolo-build a level of conviviality and habitability, beyond institutional skins, under a gravitational field?’ Ernesto Neto, *Conviviality and Habitability at the Edges of the World*

‘In recent years the application of topological concepts and methods to the study of dynamic systems has led to important advancements in our understanding of some basic aspects of the behaviour of complex phenomena appearing in different domains – material structures, living organisations and cognitive processes. Beside their intrinsic scientific importance, the new universality patterns emerging in such phenomena have significant implications for philosophy such as the venerable problem of morphogenesis, or generation of forms. Artistic endeavours, such as Ernesto Neto’s works, are pushing these formal almost abstract questions far beyond the purely intellectual realm, into a novel horizon of powerful aesthetic resources.’ Luiz Alberto Oliveira, *Topology and Complexity: an Endeavour*

This paper focuses on Ernesto Neto’s installation at the Panthéon in Paris, *Leviathan Toth* (2006), which invests the Panthéon with a confrontation between the *image of power* (in its modern Hobbesian form) and the *power of the image*. Neto brings us into a semiotics of intensities that does not belong to the ‘aesthetic regime’, as described by Jacques Rancière, but rather to a diagrammatic agency addressed to site-specific art. The latter will be (re)constructed after Deleuze and Guattari – from a biopolitics of the Body without Organs to a Body without Image. This Body confers on signs a new material power of decoding, which destratifies the space (physical, symbolic, discursive, institutional) anchored around the oscillations of Foucault’s Pendulum, in an energetics of forces. It thereby offers a diagrammatic alternative to the metaphor-image of aesthetics. Éric Alliez, *Diagrammatic Agency versus Aesthetic Regime: Ernesto Neto’s Anti-Leviathan*

‘What does it mean to ‘know’? Topologically diverse and geometrically
perverse, nature embraces throughout its evolutionary history structures of being that appal the most advanced mathematical minds. Knotted eels, crenellated corals and undulating sea slugs realize in their architectures spatial configurations that ‘educated’ humans long deemed impossible. Topology and geometry – the dual mathematical disciplines of form – have cascaded over the past two centuries into a series of intellectual revelations that had been physically understood in the organic realm since the Silurian age. Through an exploration of embodied knowledge in humble, sessile and brainless beings at the edges of human consciousness, this paper aims towards a rehabilitation of material wisdom, suggesting a radical, transformative alternative to modern symbolic modes.' Margaret Wertheim, *The Hyperbolic Imaginary: Topology and Geometry as Bodily Being*

This keynote conversation will be followed by a seminar led by **Bernard Burgoyne** on **28 January 2012**.

‘The Edges of the World are constituted around pathways and contours, which grasp the spatial neighbourhoods involved in everyday life. These spaces embody the pathways or disconnections with which people are intimately engaged. They constitute the way in which spatial realities are at play in the determination of people’s lives: alternative pathways can often be found through such an enveloping space.’ Bernard Burgoyne

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