

(Essay for Bartow + Metzgar Catalogue 2008

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**Metamorphoglomulations: A Disaption of Disjecta  
(B+M)**

**1. Diagrammatic Corrupture:**

*A. How do we simultaneously engage with the world around us and come to develop an emergent model of it?*

*B. How do we, in our engagement with this world, develop with it experimental tools that inflect back upon us and inflect out into the world -- changing both of us?*

*C. How do we in the midst of action, work, not to gain clarity and knowledge, but to develop new senses and become part of new forms of engagement?*

**2. A Program as Description:**

1. Engage with reality and simultaneously map it.
2. Map dynamically and produce a fluid map.
3. The map is co-produced by us, our engagement, and the world, but it is not reducible to any of these.
4. The map becomes an object with its own agency.
5. The map is what changes both us and our world.
6. The map is thus not a representation of a pre-existing reality.
7. The map is a mediator that gathers forces into new systems.
8. This mediator works through developing larger and larger systems of entanglements.
9. We need to remain blind to all of this, or we detour the process back into the representations developed by preexisting systems.
10. A map, a mediator, is a tool to blind not illuminate.
11. The new that is emerging is itself nearly blind and is nourished by darkness.
12. A mediator needs a diverse assemblage of forces to begin with.
13. We as subjects cannot subjectively have a non-synthetic experience of radically diverse forces.

14. We are subjects who synthesize reality to make it stable and navigable.

15. Mediators, as systems, need to marginalize their makers to activate an evolutionary becoming of the subject outside of their habits.

16. Maps, mediators, begin with diagrams of habits and systems to refuse these habits.

Bartow+Metzgar are a collective, a multiplicity -- in short they are their own mediators. These installations and other practices are the event of a map mapping as an experience experiencing. The who, the where, the what, is all suspended. They, as B+M -- as an installation -- are an event in practice of mediators mediating without agent or pre-mediated grounds. Dynamic forces inflecting dynamic forces. This is cartography in the most traditional sense. They are a cartographic event. Gilles Deleuze in describing Michel Foucault's practices notes that "cartography is coextensive with the whole social field... It is an abstract machine... It is a machine that is almost blind and mute that makes others see and speak. It is closer to theatre than factory... intersocial and constantly evolving...". This begins to get at what is unique in the work of B+M -- for while Foucault's abstract methodology was machinic it rarely produced an object that worked in this manner. B+M is a form of co-extensive theatre of cartographic becoming -- blind and mute so that others speak and hear otherwise. Deleuze goes on to say that these diagrams/maps act "as a non-unifying immanent cause that is coextensive with the whole social field... and these relations between forces takes place 'not above' but within the very tissue of the assemblage they produce" (Deleuze, Foucault. pp. 34-37). In moving into the space of the work of B+M we move into this nearly flat space of multi-dimensional forces -- of which we see to know so little. These maps, diagrams and practices of cartography work as a challenge to conceptualization. Their understanding is inseparable from an involvement in a praxis. The work becomes its own description and explanation. But this will be in our future.

## **2. Colloquiesum of Demos:**

There is much to be said in this work about how it rethinks painting, drawing and questions relating to specifics of an art history. These are important and active questions in this work and the practice of B+M, it is a practice that does radically rethink painting as part of global media events. But I would like to situate this work on a more general and perhaps unfortunately vague plane. This is the level of experience and engagement in general. An observation then (coming after the act of their work): Kant in the *Critique of Judgment* is not developing a formal aesthetic system (which would lead to the questions above) but rather posing the question of how is it possible to understand things in our world for which we have no formal category of understanding? How do we come to terms with things that we do not understand? How do things that are outside our categories actually shift these categories? When does form work in an immanent manner? Where is this action located? An alternative definition of aesthetics could be found in this very action and question -- the contingent artifice of making newness visible. Perhaps this is Bartow+Metzgar's formalism? Perhaps this is the artifice of our experience?

## **3. Disjecta: Finally Nothing**

We are our experience -- nothing but the event of our becoming. Nothing but what we are as yet not. Nothing but that which cannot happen -- cannot happen to us. And then -- suddenly we are nothing but that which has changed to become what cannot happen to us. Then there is nothing we can understand from before. For before this nothing -- is a nothing becoming -- that is at the heart of our experience. Yes finally nothing.

Yes, thus, nothing. Nothing doing. Bartow+Metzgar, an event in this event. Nothing, but

this astonishment -- nothing...

far ahead this.

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