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Exploding all explosions

Reconfiguring art and architectural meaning, matter, and space with Cornelia Parker's *Cold Dark Matter* (1991)

Abstract

In our paper, we seek to explore Cornelia Parker's art and how it engages with exhibition making that overwrites self-referential narratives by revising art and architectural meaning, experience, and space. We intend to theorise how Parker's non-adaptive and divergent architectural artforms transgress artifactual biases and disarticulate the adaptive preferences and prerogatives in exhibition practice. Instead, she offers a speculative possibility space of non-totality and the devalorisation of meaning yet retaining the ability to respond. Parker's radical technics of installation assume an arbitrariness. Her installations, we think, disrupt meaning and genre-conforming specificities and reimagine non-essential ways to de-concretise conventional exhibition making that subsumes the totalising agencies of architectural meaning and representation which invariably arrives at dense rigidities. Parker's large-scale installations like her *Cold Dark Matter* (1991) not only dislocate the essentialist ways of exhibition practice but also reimagine speculative and innovative technics of spatial and architectural manipulation that fractalises the demarcating ontologies of spatiality and perception, producing immersive and collectively attuned more-than-artifacts that move beyond transcendental dependencies with more-than-art resonances. Parker's artform entails an architectural practice of speculative reworlding which effectuates an affective unfolding of matter and space, instead of imposing fixities or homeostatic formalisations on them. Through these deviant architectural expressions, we shall attempt to conceptualise how Parker stands out and practises a necessary artistic incompleteness to destabilise and confront the architectural rigidities in exhibition making and move towards a radical and non-conformist expressivity that accentuates the untapped virtual potentialities of mind, matter and space to produce events and become something more—a fractalising multiplicity recalibrating the collective dynamics of spatiality, sensibility and perception in relation to curatorial methodologies and experiences by designing alternative exhibitions that involve a radical unbecoming in praxis.

Introduction

Contemporary exhibition practices are defined by a narrative of sedentariness, segregation, gaze, cataloguing, and myth-making. Articulated by the compressional models of artifactualisation, exhibitions have been adopting the language of conformity, uniformity, and totalisation. Through Cornelia Parker's installation art, we intend to counter the onto-epistemological agency of adaptivity in the politics of architectural and spatial representations in exhibition practices that have lost its topos. Parker's art counters concretisation. With a special focus on her *Cold Dark Matter* (1991), we intend to study Parker's installation art and how the work's

engagement with a space where it is exhibited de-concretises the architecture of this space and, via an extension, its exhibition context. This paper shall postulate a speculative and philosophical discourse on de-concretisation of artistic and curatorial practice, architecture, display, and exhibition making. We shall study how the technics involved in Parker's installation art metabolise without any logic of exclusion, how her ways of exhibition making manifests a possibility space of intervention, and how the expression of de-concretised artistic practice colliding with the spatio-architectural expressivity brings about a new flexibility not only in the ways of seeing, but also in attempts to disarticulate the organism of the exhibition itself, thereby ceasing to be an exhibition, and becoming something more.

Parker's art, as she herself claims, is non-essentially pluralistic (Vickers 2019, 98). It is abundant with an excess of non-meaning. It can be argued to be an impersonal field of anti-meaning. When asked upon the subject of her work, she has explicitly spoken against genre-specific frames of references. Her work is not one that is meant to be reduced to certain intellectual premises, as well as spatio-temporal historic totality, even when it speaks of a *somewhere* and a *somewhen*, for instance, in *War Room* (2015). Parker's artifacts are more about a politics of spatial representation which reimagines a topos without any necessary dictation of logos. It is a speculative possibility space, where perception, expression, reception, and convention collide to reconfigure and reimagine new ways of seeing.

Despite being non-adaptive, Parker's art retains the ability to respond. Contemporary geopolitical, environmental, historical concerns are inextricable from her work. She has been explicitly vocal about the political commitment of art.

This is the time we all need to politically engage. We need art more than ever because it's like a digestive system, a way of processing (Parker, as cited in Tate[b]).

Although her proclamation about the sensibility of art's conscious and response-able engagement with politics carries an edge of insurrection, it is more committed to the praxis of a processual manifestation of a possibility space of aesthetic-political mediation into how to destabilise, disarticulate, and reconfigure the epistemic enclosures. It is neither absolutist, nor does it propose propagandist infantilism. That which is desired out of her art is neither a sense of historical closure, nor any indulgent upholding of self-referential narrative. Instead, it is an invitational ground of experiential possibilities which are meant to be encountered, non-essentially, non-adaptively, and without any domination of meaning. It has no intention to become a sacred relic of human civilisation. It defers genre-specific frames of reference only to arrive at a negation of

meaning and thereby, representing malleable non-meaning. Its viscosity of referential meaning is contingent.

Parker's oeuvre, in a post-Duchampian mode, ignores the definitiveness of form yet retains the Duchampian sensibility, for instance, in Auguste Rodin's *The Kiss* (1882) sculpture which she wrapped using a 'mile of string'.¹ Her intervention is a subversive mockery of traditional meaning which is subsumed as a totalising phenomenon, tampering which, as it had been the case for Parker, is an offensive aberration in practice. There is neither any absolute acceptance, nor any absolute rejection. Her art is laden with interpretative differentials that acknowledge the erosion of meaning in contemporary art. This deviant nature deconstructs and destabilises interpretative and experiential stability. Parker's art interprets the experience of seeing. Through intensities, collectivities, haecceities, segmentarities, Parker's art, and its projection upon the retina, results in the co-production of non-adaptive alterities of meaning and representation which is reciprocated by the deflected and dislocated totalising-interpretative gaze of the spectator. The artifact gazed upon is a dispersive field of (com)possibilities and speculative worlding, whereupon every point and every pixel relocates the gaze to another multiplicity before it tries to assume any meaning of totalisation. In so doing, Parker's art activates a flux. It refuses to be a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. For Parker, to arrive is to arrive at an unmeaning non-totality. Parker's non-meaning in art is inseparable from retinal arbitrariness of the spectator. This reciprocative acknowledgement of arbitrariness in interaction assumes a position quite contrary to the formula of art altogether. Her oeuvre reflects her advance into an artistic incompleteness—a non-total open set of philosophical transversalities positioned against adaptive preferences and prerogatives of representation.

Parker's practice is vigorously present in her *Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View* (1991), first exhibited in the Chisenhale Gallery in London. The gallery was a suitable fit as it was "a dark space" that received "no natural light" and Parker "wanted to make something that had its own light source" (Parker 2022). She contacted the then curator, Jonathan Watkins, and proposed her idea of blowing something up in that space (Parker 2022). Inspired by the extreme absurd cartoon deaths in Tom and Jerry, Road Runner, and other comedies, Parker was drawn to the visual analogies (Parker 2016). One of the impetuses behind the 1991 installation was an idea where objects met 'tragic ends' and then "resurrected" (Parker 2016). This idea of resurrection is always carried out via a material as well as onto-epistemological transvaluation of space, light, matter, and representation. She tells us,

I resurrect things that have been killed off ... My work is all about the potential of materials – even when it looks like they've lost all possibilities (Art Story).


¹ In 1942, for the exhibition *First Papers of Surrealism*, Andre Breton, who organised the exhibition on Surrealistic Art in New York, approached Marcel Duchamp for an installation. Duchamp designed an installation called *His Twine*, which soon acquired a popular name—*Sixteen Miles of String*. This installation had a precedent in the 1938 *International Surrealist Exhibition* in Paris, where he lined the ceiling of the main hall of the *Galerie des Beaux-Arts* with 1200 empty coal bags.

Cold Dark Matter is thought out of wreckage. Without blatantly jumping into the fantastic conceptualisation of remaking of other possible worlds from a nowhere and nowhen, Parker undertakes the laborious task of constructing a departure from these concrete narratives. She shows that the aftermath of the explosion does not concretise ruination. For her, ruins are not unthinkable grounds. Instead, her artwork is thinking upon the ruins of thought to imagine other thinking-worlds without ignoring the conditions of the current one. Such an idea of resurrection emphasises on the potentialities and affectivities of matter and materials already present, and the retaining of their will to construct otherworlds on unthinkable grounds, especially when they are thought to have lost all potency.

After Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Cold War, the nuclear race, and the aggressive militarisation, the conception of the 1991 exploded view needs no conceptual premise. In fact, Parker herself stated her concerns about the IRA bombings to Leigh Ann Miller (Parker 2022). Since the 1970s, the Provisional Irish Republican Army had continued their bombing carnage in England. From the violent campaigns in the 1970s to the Hyde Park and Regents Park bombings in 1982 to the Kent Barracks bombings in 1989 to the attacks in the early 1990s—and which continued even after that—these violent actions and counterreactions formed the historical, political, and a concrete contextual framework of *Cold Dark Matter*. The IRA bombings are just another sprocket in the narrative of explosion. Parker is haunted by the spectre of explosions. However, the manifestation of this haunting cannot be reduced to be a mere response to a historical event or events and nothing else. When asked about the significance of the narrative properties of the charred pieces, Parker tells us that “it was more to do with fear of IRA explosions,” but it was “always about freezing the moment and looking at it carefully” (Parker, as cited in Ure-Smith 2022). “Now it’s like a universal bomb” (Parker, as cited in Ure-Smith 2022). It is an orchestration of damage without evacuating from history. Suspended, it obtains a new temporal exigency—that of timelessness and reconstruction. As the charred particles are relocalised into the liminality of suspendedness, its narrative affectivities are estranged. This estrangement is neither an absolute erasure of meaning, nor does it provoke more meaningfulness. Instead of tethering or untethering, it is dithering.²

Cultural artifacts bombard us constantly with the imagery and iconography of explosion and war. They are always-already present. The linear and concrete narrative of explosion is being perpetually fossilised. For Parker, this overused narrative has reached an equilibrial state. The narrative of explosion no longer produces novel forms of experience, and the culture industry has become a junkie, addicted to the pastiche and monotonous narratives. In this sense, explosions are pornographic. There is no desire. There

² Dithering not in the sense that it creates an illusion. Rather, it is a creative incorporation of stutter—productive noise added to the excess of meaning—into language to transvaluate the obvious routes of language and meaning.



is no future of explosions. There is exhaustion and stagnancy, eternally sluggish. Parker (Tate[a]) speaks about the permeation of the archetypal bang and the bombardment of the image of explosion in literature, media, art, etc. The bang appears to be ever present and becoming a concrete organism. However, the archetypal image is not only restricted to the explosion, but also extended into the "refuge-like" architecture of the "archetypal shed" which the artist chose to blow up (Tate[a]). The architecture of the shed defines the affectivity of the architecture of the exploded view. The shed is both conceptually and visually blown up. The blowing up is "important to the [anti-]meaning of the work." (Tate[a]) Parker explains the shed as a "time capsule," (Parker 2016) a storage place meant for things we "cannot . . . throw away" (Parker, as cited in Tate[a]). This shed is a fantastic place of memory, repressions, secrets—a space full of meaning knots. It is a personal museum space—a composite organism, always locked, always dank, a-trophied in slow decay. This artifactualisation of personal history, memory, and meaning is a compressional model of romance and mundanity. It is latent with conceptual artifacts that retain the self-referential narrative of personal significance, like an antique that neither lives nor dies. It is infantile and devoid of growth. The shed is the definitive architecture of a historic closure turned into an artifact of nostalgia and memory. It turns into a claustrophobic space of repressive meaning, superfluous and surplus residues dictated by specific frames of reference. The mundane shed caves in on itself, like *hikikomori*—a modern day pathological phenomenon of isolation, solitude, and retirement into remoteness and depravity. It is a reclusive space for burnt-out objects; it is defined by seclusion, exhaustion, and fatigue. It naturalises compression via a concentration of discarded discourse accumulated in an infantile topos—an isolated system with entropic meaning and dissipation of material narratives advancing towards a uniform temperature, a stagnant equilibrium, a heat-death. Hence, the blowing apart is a negentropic reshaping of space.

The choreographed explosion acts as a kind of deliverance from the territorialisation of meaning. The detonation frees the shed from the concreteness of locational meaning and dislocates its referential agency. As the domestic fidelity of the shed is dismantled, the meaningful perimeters are changed. Parker unmakes and refashions the reclusive domesticity of the shed to potentialize it. In a world impregnated with the horrors of compression, a world of respiratory disorders, motion sickness, and ADHD, nurtured by the technologies of speed (elevators, pod hotels, office cubicles, capsules, technologies of compression), and the strangulating ligature of the accelerationist drive, the blowing apart is the opening up of a space of breathability—a possibility space in the compressional continuum to counter the claustrophobic and asthmatic engulfment of meaning. Parker's offensive reappropriation of the explosion transvaluates all

meaning of explosion articulated by defensive militarisation. The future of all explosions is cancelled.

The blowing up demonumentalises the concreteness present in monumentality—the concreteness of history, memory, and meaning, especially those that retain a tendency to valorise. Parker confronts this artifactual valorisation in curatorial practice. Hal Foster (2022) observes,

As we know, many monuments commemorate acts of violence (war, conquest, empire, expropriation) in ways that effectively cover them up. Parker began her career with little feats of “demonumentalizing,” casting souvenirs of iconic structures like Big Ben in lead, then hanging them upside down or flooding them with bathwater. Her inaugural move was thus one of antimonumental counterviolence. In a stretch, this might recall the ancient Roman practice known as *damnatio memoriae* (literally, “condemnation of memory”), whereby the image of a leader, once honored on a coin or a column but now deemed an enemy of the people, would be struck out in such a way that both acts, the commemoration and the cancellation, were retained (later iconoclasts carried on this practice in their own ways). Updated, such an approach might split the difference between the often unsatisfactory alternatives of simply retaining an offensive monument and removing it altogether. Parker points to such a third way: How many disputed monuments might be given the Parker treatment—blown up, to respond to demands of social justice, and then strung up, for purposes of historical reflection?

Parker’s *Cold Dark Matter* presents a haunting scenario of an exploded view working against the traditional concepts of architecture, space, and sculpture. She collaborated with the British Army, who, “to her surprise,” “were very co-operative”³ (Tate[a]) and “very gung-ho” (Parker, as cited in Ure-Smith 2022). Without any pyrotechnics or the use of special effects, Parker “decided on plastic explosives as providing ‘the archetypal explosion’” (Tate[a]).⁴ These blown-up particulates, skewed and charred from the force of the explosion, which survived the blast are suspended using transparent wire from the ceiling along with a single light bulb in the centre which casts haunting overlapped, folded, and oblique over-looming dramatic shadows, criss-crossing, skewing, and slippery, simultaneously converging and diverging, lacerating each other—a deviant architecture emerging out of its own (dis) proportions and dimensions, overcoming itself and topologically unfolding an abcanny geometry like a monstrous blossom blooming haphazardly in every direction all at once—across the gallery room, its floors, its walls, and even upon the spectators. It is a multiplicity. It is larger than its own body; an alien transgressing

³ Parker collaborated with the British Army via the Army School of Ammunition in Banbury. Major Doug Hewitt supervised the project.

⁴ One of the reasons why Parker might have decided upon using plastic explosives was because during the mid and late 1980s, the IRA used Semtex, a plastic explosive, in their bombing attacks.

the limits of its own skin—a traitorous prion always folding itself into imperceptible and nomadic becomings. In so doing, it becomes an artifact of non-quantitative and non-numerical minority, in the Deleuzian sense—of minor becomings, dispelling mythic resonance, constantly fractalizing the ontological borders of perception, constantly otherising itself—becoming the Other, becoming-whatsoever.⁵ It repels adaptivity and conformational absorption as it tries to question the meaning of art itself in order to break away from the demarcation problem (see Kingsmith 2017) in its radical pursuit of becoming more-than-art. *Cold Dark Matter* presents a scenario of explosive non-meaning—the explosion of entropic meaning and its subsequent emergence into an excess of non-total, a scrambled assemblage of meaning-knots suspended mid-air. Contrary to a thermodynamical whimpering entropic heat-death, Parker presents the picture of a limbic bang—an affective disintegration of the grand narratives. From the totality in structure of the garden shed and its contents that appeal a totalising gaze, the exploded view is more of a radical stripping—a topological unfolding of matter, as if everything is laid bare, “element by element” which we can “walk round and look through” (Tate[a]).

After the explosion, when the blown-up particulates were being gathered by Parker’s team, it was found that some objects were either missing or blown away or “totally destroyed” (Tate[a]). The concrete totality of the shed—its structural integrity, its architectural and spatial demarcations—prior to the blast has been deconcretised, and it has been carried out by the very vulnerability communicated by the weapons of destruction and the agencies which promote them, against which we are wrestling—reflecting violence through violence without perpetuating historic agency, as if the weapons of war have made violence thinkable/intelligible to more-than-human perception, even though the existence of violence preceded the conception of life. Parker’s *Cold Dark Matter* only becomes intelligible as a metabolising stitchwork of non-total collectivities, haecceities, subjectivities, and technologies. It confronts the problem of thinking complexity between spatialities, temporalities, agencies, and bodies through which Parker reconfigures historical agencies considering the very complexities which her multi-layered work projects. For instance, her collaboration with the army could hint at the artist’s subtle radicality, a kind of subdued sarcasm, an acidic prank.

Parker’s collaboration with the army, a repressive apparatus working for the State, problematises contemporary artistic practice. Involving the military does not entail the overturning of artistic rituals. It pronounces the complicity always-already present in the reactionary apparatuses of the State, controlled by the State, only waiting to be tapped out of their controlled state, out of their own repressiveness. Parker, like an agent provocateur, persuades the law to perform for her without breaking the law. Her practice infiltrates into the system and infects like a pathogen, like a refugee, like an alien—like a protein particle which enters the system, infects,


⁵ According to Deleuze, minority is not quantitative; it is not a matter of size. The Deleuzian rhetoric of minority relies upon the concept of becoming.

and attempts to transform it from within. Even if the effect is not statistical, the practice is means to craft new maps according to the transformations in the systemic mesh. Contemporary artistic practices are guided by a sense of cancellation. For instance, the prejudices of Nazism or, of Racism, are often met with counter-prejudices, which inevitably leads to the logic of exclusion. While these reactionary biases are to be strung up, they are more often excluded completely, either via total cancellation or by clichéd condemnation. Both tropes have been overused and have lost their potential to unground. Rather, practices, even subversive ones, have become rigid, conformational, adaptive, and territorial. Parker's divergent and transgressive artistic practice metabolises.

Cold Dark Matter is not a solid sculpture. Parker herself has said, "I've never made a solid sculpture; I am more interested in the space with and around the mass, in atmosphere" (Tate[a]). "The space between" the suspended particulates is significant as it confronts the problem of demarcation, playing with space and light, and via an extension, with the gaze of the spectator, as the "boundaries between the work and the viewer are blurred" (Tate[a]). *Cold Dark Matter* is a fractalized mass, fractalizing the ontology of space, time, and the agencies of society, politics, and culture. The re-creation of the moment of explosion into an exploded view cannot be quantified. It cannot be demarcated. An architectural fractal and an artifact of transversalities, Parker's art de-localises, de-stabilises but more importantly, re-arranges, re-localises the particles, suspending them into possibilities instead of levelling them or restructuring them back to its concrete form. The diffusion of the absolute total along with its indexed contents is compensated by the distribution in re-arrangement. Each particle becomes an independent piece suspended collectively as an incomplete (w)hole, endowed with the possibility of different subjectivities—especially those which are combatively active and battling against the oppressive pull of gravity, an always pulling force which is constantly trying to 'swallow.' It is an inverted repression where pressure is not exerted upon from 'above' to subdue, but rather a constant attractive drag felt, a gravitational pull that the ground exerts on the surface from 'below'—a subterranean pull into the abdominal gorge of the planet; crushed from 'below.'

There is also a hint of a Donnesque metaphysical protest, a refusal staving against the corporeal coup of death. The suspended particles are Parker's Donne-like critical dialogues through which she proclaims: Gravity, "be not proud"⁶ (Donne 1895, 34). In *Subconscious of a Monument* (Parker 2005), where "fragments of dry soil," extracted from beneath the Leaning Tower of Pisa "in order to prevent its collapse," are "suspended on wires from the gallery ceiling," we discover this anomalous projection, a projective inversion where the 'below' is removed from the ground and suspended 'above'—a revolt against the invading force of gravity that is constantly pulling us, compelling us to fall and submit. Suspension is the anti-pull—the anti-fall, an artifactual precursor to flight (both spatial and temporal), an ungrounding of objectified and subjected subjectivities.

6 John Donne, an English metaphysical poet, wrote Sonnet X: *Death, be not proud*, where the poet defies the historic and mythic reputation of death, and denounces the dreadfulness death projects. Donne overthrows the narrative of death, its ontologisation of depravity and despair. Instead, his theo-logical argument against death brings death alive and by doing so, logically, subjects death to its own death. This is the death of the narrative of death.



Parker's art, battling against the constant conceptual and material pull of gravity, defies the model of gravitational conformity. Exhibition practices conform to this gravitational logic, its fixating and self-indulgent narrative. It has become essentially adaptive. Gravity places, fixes, and accumulates in its own territory. It is totalising. Parker's art refuses to be fixed, placed, and pulled. Without disregarding this territorialisation, Parker suspends her work upon the territory she defies. To create new architectural, spatio-temporal sensemaking, she constructs that which is antithetical to the demand dynamics of gravity and homeostatic curatorial conformity. Parker realises the need of other non-concretising frames of references in architecture and art, and therefore, the need of a new configuration of exhibition making. This suspension is the anti-pull rebelling against the conformational narrative of gravity. As if in a faceoff, both staring face to face, coexisting, the suspension—a rebuke—mocks gravity and strips it of its meaningfulness. Parker transgresses the conceptual borders of exhibition making. Displaying rebellious works that invariably become an artifact of these conformational logics is not enough today. There is a need to rethink architectural sensemaking and the frames of references that condition curatorial practice, even at a basic level such as placement and positioning of artworks in galleries.

Parker, moving beyond the subdued discourses of the academic intelligentsia, attempts it. She imagines a space that allows for a shared recognition—a space without any self-referential narratives. Without reducing exhibition making to comfortably accommodate the visitor's perception, this space, along with the asymmetrically disproportionate suspension, breaks down the existing spatial, narratological, representational, architectural, and perceptual frames of reference that condition our ways of seeing. This is a breaking down of the demand dynamics of sight, a topological deconcretisation of the ways of seeing through radical intensities and affectivities unfolding the eye of the spectator, the way we see and think in space. This space deliberately alienates us from the familiar narrative of explosion and introduces us into a vermiform narrative of exploding the explosion. It is a breathability pocket that speculates on how to rethink the existing architectural rigidities. *Cold Dark Matter*, then, is the Copernican trauma upon the sensibility of the existing logics of architectural sensemaking. The centrality of gravity is deterritorialised and decentred. The narrative of explosion is deconcretised. Parker, without stopping at the decentralisation of the conformational poetics of architecture, space and exhibition making, reframes the artistic, architectural, and spatial dynamics in light of this trauma. She labours to resituate her exhibition in the consequences of this trauma, and attempts to build a space which rethinks spatial (anti?)representation with localised bodies and concepts. In the wake of this trauma (the trauma caused by the material explosion as well as by the conceptual destabilisation), *Cold Dark Matter* is Parker's manifestation of a possibility fissure through which she intervenes into how to reconfigure the existing tropes of exhibition making.

Cold Dark Matter is a project in processual recalibrating resurrection. And in its re-calibrations, it enters a continuous synthesis—synthesising each 'separate' yet avoiding to 'become' *something*. It is always in becoming—a work always in progress; in flux and perpetually kinetic—a nomadic mobility. It contains a molecular logic of sense. It is a molecular becoming. As Derek P McCormack (2007, 369) puts it, "materiality of the molecular is not a stable ground with which to anchor representations." Within Parker's *Cold Dark Matter*, particles link, detach, suspend, decay, rearrange, readjust, reconfigure, connect and combine, "where the outside of one" becomes the "inside of another" (Rose, as cited in McCormack 2007, 369). It is extremely ironical to see that in a view of explosion which is perpetually exploding, Parker creates a corpuscular space of coalescent collectivities. The subparticles are mobilised into experiential and perceptual fields. *Cold Dark Matter* is a nomadic mass—dehistoricised, demythologised, non-adaptive, and undifferentiated. By being incomplete, it provides enough possibility space—a "breathing space" according to Parker (2003, 369), the localised interaction with which invites the spectator to experience otherworlds, other-collectivities and other-narratives of matter. In so doing, it presents the possibility to reiterate new material affectivities. The perpetuating contingency is also revealed in the processual re-arrangement of the disjointed artifacts. Every re-arrangement compels the fragmentations to acquire a new experiential and perceptual possibility. Such re-adjustment, by the virtue of its structural, formal and affective resonance, becomes in itself a performance. It is more of a non-adaptive collective attunement which confronts the limits of experience. The re-arrangement of the exploded mass becomes more intriguing by the fact that each re-arranged profile, in comparison with all other re-arrangements, possess a separate subjectivity, structure, perceptual quality, and resonance, even if they happen to be coincidentally and permutationally same. This implies that the subjective experience of the frozen explosion re-arrangements is always more than the experience of one of its combinations.

The design of the explosion and how it was enacted with the help of the army reveals Parker's intention towards an extreme case of interaction. Inspired by a cartoon and implemented by the army, her work presents a symphonious orchestration of completely invariable, if not disobligingly incompatible, forces of the social ecology. In the wake of a world riven with the politics of segregation, *Cold Dark Matter*, composed of post-nuclear debris, speaks about compossibility—between the quantifiable and the unquantifiable, a way of formalising the explosion (Parker 2016). Situated in the exhibition hall is a nebulous nomadic mass of a frozen explosion caught in a continuum of awe, a perpetual loop of fragmented deferrals arrested in the momentum of a detonation, as if it is exactly that which was needed to break away from the excess of incontrovertible meaning. It is an introspective recoiling of thought

against the limitations imposed upon it; a recoiling of thought from the excess icons of violence. There is a subtle hint of the Kantian negative aesthetic in the work that counteracts violence through a reflective violence to the imagination. The shadows cast on the walls and the floor hints at new possibilities, especially one of indeterminant experiences—a (com)possibility space of co-existential indeterminacy.

Cold Dark Matter re-models the logic of binocular vision. Parker's work requires a body full of eyes to get induced in such a distributed multi-optic experience which it calls for. The installation of the work, along with the performance that precedes it, is as much artistic as the exhibited outcome. The installation is not an epiphenomenon of Parker's artistic vision. Extended into the poetics of space in exhibition making, the installations of the work in different galleries—which include architectural and spatial (dis)proportions and folds unique to each other—reshape the models of conventional exhibitions as they challenge the spatial and architectural rigidities in curatorial practice. This is a moving exhibition. Even though it has been acquired (territorialised) by Tate as a part of its permanent collection, *Cold Dark Matter* is not de-potentialised. It has not been castrated. It can move and that is very threatening to curatorial rigidities—challenging the prerogatives of conventional exhibition making. It is dynamic and moving in the sense it is fractalizing. *Cold Dark Matter* retains some degree of curatorial agency through which it addresses the conformational grounds in curatorial practice. Parker's laboratory of experiments paralyses the demarcating a priori assumptions grounded in architectural practice by provoking the space to reflect and think at the limits of thinking—a defiant thinking that expands, intercepts, interacts, and counteracts itself and its own limitations beyond the reasonable and conceptual finitude of epistemic determination which precludes, unreasonably, from becoming something more, something other than what it is and how it is. Fascinated by its own spatial, architectural, and conceptual liminality, the violence of the exploded view violates to bypass and overcome its own organismic body to cease to be an object of art and become a moving limit of thought. In this sense, *Cold Dark Matter* is a liminal mass that non-essentially and somewhat paradoxically operates in anti-stasis. Parker (as cited in Tate[a]) explains that suspension post-explosion siphons "the aura of death" and activates the residual vitalism in debris. Its life is radioactive. The exploded view is not about the explosion. It is exploding the explosion. It overtakes the narrative of the explosion and folds it to become something other than the explosion. With every installation installed at a different place, a different re-explosion of the exploded view is found. This is where we find the installation adds vitality to the work. For instance, other variations on *Cold Dark Matter* were seen in the Phoenix Art Museum and the de Young museum in San Francisco (Ure-Smith 2022). Further, in 1997, Parker exhibited another installation like *Cold Dark Matter*. The 1997 installation was called *Mass, or Colder Darker Matter*.

Cold Dark Matter's exploded view is thought re-thought at the noetic limits of thinking. While, before installing, Parker lays out the charred bits on the gallery floor, it resembles a morgue. This is also seen in *Thirty Pieces of Silver* (1988–89), where objects crushed by a steamroller are laid out on the gallery floor. However, once the installation of *Cold Dark Matter* is transformed and re-energised, the monotonous forensic metaphors are overcome and "it stopped being like a morgue;" it "became more like a dynamic display" (Parker 2022). The narratives of explosion are nothing but a part of a grand totalising narrative of death that corresponds to the legitimisation of a unified view. Contrary to this, Parker's is a plurality of anti-narratives that are not woven together as a uniform whole. Rather, Parker's art is stitched together not as local narratives of a fragmented uniformity, but as an un-whole which refrains from formulating the legitimacy of narratology, of the ritualisation of violence. Parker "does not aestheticize trauma so much as ritualize violence, transforming it, framing it, controlling it, and there is nothing particularly personal in the outcome" (Foster 2022). The installation, the exhibition making, and the viewing, come together as un-whole performances—explosion constructed from the residues of explosion, operating as "relics" of caution (Foster 2022).

We think that Parker is not only trying to reconfigure destroyed objects due to some fascination with destruction or reconstructing destroyed objects with new formulations. If so, that would just be another way of solving puzzles and Legos which even if collapsed have a way or could be made to fit it. But we don't think that it is just fitting or refixing that is the primary objective presented through her art, but rather the experimental awareness to move beyond the toolbox of experimental artists, their experimental data, into a transgressional experience of exploration which trespasses the limits of human experience. The very nature of the detonation and the materials used is beyond the ordinary permutational-combinational compositions. The final work, which is always in a flux, is non-essentially a schizoid rupture of experiences, and the experience projected by the exhibited work is inextricable from the exhibition space itself. The construction of the gallery does not rely on an oversimplified bilateral symmetry, and if the exhibited concreteness of Parker's artworks is continually dislocated and discontinued, then every temporal exhibition undergoes a processual reconfiguration of the very framework itself, along with its contextual, perceptual, formal, and other expressions.

Parker obliges us to think about the expression of architecture in exhibition spaces. This is explicitly displayed in the *Cold Dark Matter* exhibitions, where the immaterial is also a part of the artist's project (for instance, the shadow is an immaterial material which Parker uses as art equipment). This constant morphing of the framework of expressivity questions the ontology and epistemology of art and architecture, "the ceaseless constraints of the metaphor," and

becomes a transgressional attempt to exhibit “in a space beyond analogy” (Kingsmith 2017). For this, the language of exhibition that reinforces contexts and cartographies must be deterritorialised in praxis. Parker’s art is devoid of a ‘being.’ If the problem of onto-epistemological demarcation is cleared, the ‘pragmatic interest’ of locating the art in terms of a context does not persist. Whether it is the bleeding-out ink at the molecular edges of her drawings or the haphazard projection of the shadows throughout the gallery room, Parker’s practice of art remains combatively elusive to the ensnaring methods of exhibition. The delocalisation of art, its lack of a concrete definition, along with its transgressional mobility, destabilises any categorical or combinational absolutes, both in precepts and in practice. Cornelia Parker’s art remains in a “semi-stable process of becoming;” it is a “metamorphosis-machine”—a fractalizing force (Kingsmith 2017). Her non-adaptive practice is non-essentially schizoid—a praxis of “strategic affirmation” of becoming-whatsoever (Kingsmith 2017). *Cold Dark Matter’s* exploded view is more than an explosion.

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