

ARTISTIC RESEARCH WILL EAT ITSELF



The 9th SAR International Conference on Artistic Research
University of Plymouth, April 11th-13th, 2018

Geoff Cox, Hannah Drayson, Azadeh Fatehrad, Allister Gall, Laura Hopes,
Anya Lewin, Andrew Prior. EDITORS.





ARTISTIC RESEARCH WILL EAT ITSELF

The 9th SAR International Conference on Artistic Research University
of Plymouth, April 11th-13th, 2018.

EDITORS: Geoff Cox, Hannah Drayson, Azadeh Fatehrad, Allister Gall, Laura
Hopes, Anya Lewin, Andrew Prior.

ARWEI Illustrations by Dane Watkins.

Event photography by Harley Holland-Clarke, Dom Moore and Amber Wyles.

Design and layout Hannah Drayson.

The ninth edition of the SAR International Conference on Artistic Research was organised by Geoff Cox, Hannah Drayson, Azadeh Fatehrad, Allister Gall, Laura Hopes, Anya Lewin and Andrew Prior in partnership with the Society for Artistic Research represented by Johan Haarberg, Gabriele Schmid and Geir Strøm. The conference was hosted by the Arts Institute at the University of Plymouth with additional support from Kingston University and the Contemporary Aesthetics and Technology research programme, Aarhus University, Denmark. Special thanks to the speakers, artists, and performers and the research staff at the University (in particular Libby Chapman-Lane) whose support and contributions made the conference such a dynamic and generous few days.

All Rights Remain with the Individual Authors.

CONTENTS

The Call	viii
----------	------

Introduction	x
--------------	---

PART 1. DIGESTION: BREAKING DOWN METHODOLOGICAL INTROSPECTION

MULTIPLE KNOWLEDGES AND THE REDEFINITION OF THE SELF IN THE ENVIRONMENT Kat Austen	1
CHEWING THE CUD: CONVERSATION-AS-MATERIAL Emma Cocker	16
FOUR APPROACHES TO THE JOURNAL Luisa Greenfield, Camilla Graff Junior, Per Roar, Myna Trustram	19
MY PH.D. IS NONSENSE Lynne Heller	41
ESSAYING ART: AN UNMETHODOLOGICAL METHOD FOR ARTISTIC RESEARCH Emily Huurdeman	52
ART FIRST, RESEARCH AFTER María-Isabel Moreno-Montoro, María Martínez-Morales and Martha-Patricia Espíritu-Zavalza	71
SYMBIOSIS: ORGANISATION AND MUTUAL EXPLOITATION IN INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION Manoli Moriaty	81
THE VICIOUS CYCLE OF ART. CREATIVE PROCESS WITHIN ACADEMY, SOCIAL CRISIS, AND CONTRADICTIONS IN THE MEXICAN CONTEXT Giovanna Castillejos Saucedo, Nizaí González Machado	97

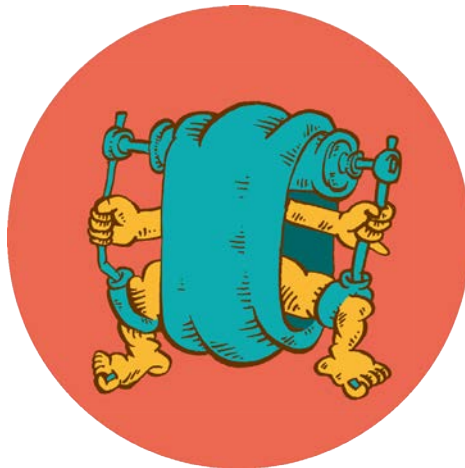
THE (CAKE) STALL OF ALTERNATIVE THOUGHTS Monica Shanta Brown	111
PANEL: CRITICAL DIGESTION, ESTRANGEMENT AND CRITIQUE: WAYS OF REGENERATION FOR ARTISTIC RESEARCH	
SELF-DIGESTION ANIMATES ARTISTIC RESEARCH. DIALOGUE AS AESTHETIC PRACTICE Nicolaj van der Meulen, Jörg Wiesel	115
HOW TO BECOME STRANGE. BETWEEN AESTHETIC EDUCATION AND AESTHETIC RESEARCH Silvia Henke	132
VERACITY IN VORACITY: ON THE FUNCTION OF ESSAYISTIC PRACTICES IN ARTISTIC RESEARCH Aurel Sieber	141
ARTISTIC RESEARCH WILL EAT ITSELF: EATING ONESELF REQUIRES ACROBATICS Henryetta Duerschlag	146



PART 2. REGENERATION: ARTISTIC RESEARCH AS A PROCESS OF BECOMING

THE KISS– UTTERANCE SURROUNDING THE UTTERANCE WITHIN Venke Aure and Mimesis Heidi Dahlsveen.	153
TRANS: A HISTORY OF FAT Julie Louise Bacon	161
EXTISPICY IN THE EVERYDAY: AN EXPLORATION OF HUMAN- ENVIRONMENT BINARIES THROUGH THE GUT Amanda Couch	177
A PLACE OF GLOOP AS A SPACE FOR BECOMING... Fo Hamblin	188
HETEROTOPIAS— OPTICAL MASTICATION AND SPACIAL RECONFIGURATION Noa Kaplan and Szilvia Ruszev	197
APPROACHING THE MATERIAL-DISCURSIVE VORTEX Roman Kirschner	204
MONSTROUS AGENCIES Karolina Kucia	212
WHAT IS ARTISTIC RESEARCH BECOMING THROUGH AUTOMORPHOGENESIS? Christiane Kues	219
FOLLOWING COTTON FABRIC, OIL PAINT AND PLASTIC BAGS Macarena Rioseco	225
DIGESTION AND REGURGITATION: METHODS OF CONTESTATION IN ARTISTIC RESEARCH Spencer Roberts	240
PERFORMANCE: VOCABLE CODE Winnie Soon & Geoff Cox	254

UTTER DISGUST AS AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC METHOD Stahl Stenslie	262
PERCEPTION CRISIS MACHINE CONGLOMERATE: A FAST ENTRY INTO THE METHODOLOGY OF SYNSMASKINEN Michelle Teran & Frans Jacobi	268
THE BODY TURNED INSIDE–OUT, UPSIDE–DOWN AND BACK TO FRONT. USING THE BODY AS A SITE OF DISCUSSION TO EXAMINE WHAT IS LEFT AFTER ARTISTIC RESEARCH HAS EATEN ITSELF Anna Walker	277
IMMIGRATE INTO YOUR SHADOWS (OR THE BORDER WILL EAT US) Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll	287

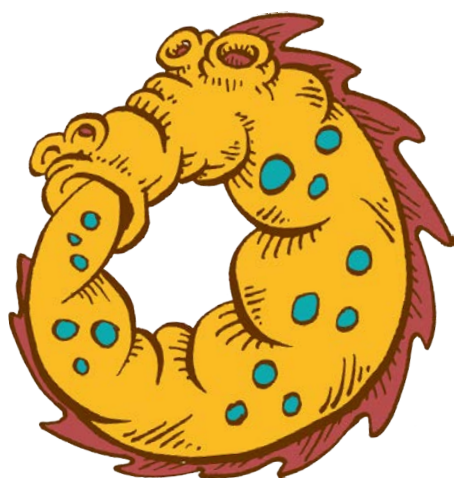


PART 3. REGURGITATION: REFLEXIVITY AND REPETITION IN ARTISTIC PRACTICE

REGURGITATED PERSPECTIVES— PERFORMANCE Annette Arlander, Hanna Järvinen, Tero Nauha and Pilvi Porkola	302
BECOMING IMPERFECT: A RECIPE FOR MAKING A COLLECTIVE FILM IN TWENTY MINUTES Allister Gall	315
VENTRILOQUISTS III Philippine Hoegen	321
TASTE SPIT SWALLOW Christina Jauernik, Esther Balfe, Christian Freude, Ludwig Löckinger	331
RECURSIVITY AS RADICAL SELF-REFERENTIALITY: VIDEO REMIXING AS (SELF)DESTRUCTION AND (SELF)REGENERATION Virginia Kuhn	338
RECEIVING QUEERLY DISPLACED UTTERANCE: FAILURE AND/AS RESPONSE IN WORKS BY GLENN LIGON AND LOW PROFILE Mark Leahy	343
EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL ECOLOGIES: THE ASTRONAUT, THE ROBOT, THE ALIEN AS RETROFLECTORS Ralo Mayer	353
IN DEFENCE OF STUPIDITY Elfe Miklautz	357
MY MOTHERS DANCING ON MY TONGUE Stephanie Misa	366
FROM VOICE-OF-GOD TO RINGMASTER: LIVE PARTICIPATORY DOCUMENTARY AND THE IMPERATIVE TO CREATE REFLEXIVE, COLLABORATIVE, MULTIPERSPECTIVAL HISTORIES Kim Nelson	367

MANIFESTO FOR THE MULTIVOCAL VOICE: PRINCIPLES FOR A PERFORMANCE VOICE IN THE VOCAL ARTS (ABRIDGED VERSION) Alex Nowitz	380
FLAVOURS AND FLAVOURINGS: TOWARDS A TYPOLOGY OF ARTISTIC RESEARCH IN MUSIC Deniz Peters	395
WHAT REMAINS? – A REVERSE-COOKING EXERCISE Anna Romanenko, Matteo Locci, Thomas Guillot et al.	403
RADICALLY EMANCIPATED: OR “I HAVE STOLEN FOR THE LOVE OF ART” Mireia c. Saladrigues	411
IT REPEATS ON YOU Sarah Scarsbrook	424





THE CALL

Between April 11th and April 13th 2018 two-hundred delegates gathered at the University of Plymouth for the 9th SAR International Conference on Artistic Research. This document collects their contributions to the conference in response to the following call;

The provocation *Artistic Research Will Eat Itself* can be understood as a warning against the dangers of methodological introspection, or as a playful invitation to explore the possibilities of a field in a constant state of becoming. In this context, the ‘cannibalism’ of artistic research ‘eating itself’ embodies a dynamic tension between self-destruction and regeneration.

If artistic research eats itself, digests itself and then releases its own waste, does it stink and linger, fertilise new growth or invade new destinations on the bottom of someone’s shoe? If we are to constantly defend and define, are we in danger of having no art left, only the claims for its ability to embody knowledge? When we bite off our own heads do we grow new tails?

Critical perspectives on the discourse surrounding artistic research might be argued to already be too formulaic or self-defeating. Making a case for its own institutional legitimacy could unwittingly reinforce some of the very things artistic research aims to critique. Yet such onto-epistemological paradoxes can offer a rich territory for exploration along with generative practices that involve reflexivity, automorphogenesis, and recursive feedback loops. In recognising auto-cannibalism as an analogy for broader socio-political and environmental concerns, one of the challenges for artistic research is to respond imaginatively to the dynamic tensions between self-destruction and regeneration.

We encourage the exploration of auto-cannibalism in its widest interpretation and invite researchers, artists and scholars of all backgrounds and in all stages of their careers to think of this call for contributions as the first kiss and to propose artworks, cooking classes, films, panels, papers, performances, workshops and other interventions which explore one of the following themes:

- Digestion: Breaking down Methodological Introspection
- Regurgitation: Reflexivity and Repetition in Artistic Practice
- Regeneration: Artistic Research as a Process of Becoming

INTRODUCTION

One line from each abstract accepted to the conference:

Over the two days we would gnaw over a hierarchy of knowledge that places quantified data at the top and the 'lower' senses at the bottom. We would seek to understand the labour practices that underpin artistic infrastructure today and avoid repeating, just repeating, self-reflexivity becoming hermetic or solipsistic, entropic or exhausted, fat archetypes. We'd delve into the sticky underbelly and collapse human-environment binaries through focusing on the gut, mix the personal and the academic, and avoid stagnating revolutions that combine a radically incessant circularity with a critical appraisal of etiquette.

We would be Communal!

We would Resist!

Be Spontaneous!

Be Becoming!

Why are the books you read so white, so male, so Eurocentric? Globalised economy and culture are intertwined, forming a complex knot of overlaps and messy interconnections. Images and sounds are not subordinate to text; the multitude of errors propelling different forms of ourselves into the world, a cannibalistic, introspective process which devours external substances and internalizes them. We would be viscous, visceral, glisten, and let lusciousness envelope flesh through its sticky, sweet intensity.

The mouth as a place of communication, of censorship, experimentation, pleasure and production. Shared bodily experiences, collective contextualizations in contemporary discourses and the wider networks of materiality. Mutation and distortions within a frame of an extended, monstrous collaboration of machines/tools, human skills and procedures. Noise and distorting electronics that "devour the innards of the bodies". Remix as a regurgitation practice, complicated by questions of gender, or sexuality, of queerness. Shut down the flow of information around the nervous system and eat our own brains.

Compulsively collect the pauses and silences.

Examine tangible experiences.

Discuss the nature-culture divide with robotic machines of loving grace.

In the last two decades the same questions repeat and repeat again. Challenge the process with the unconscious, ineffable, non-teleological and unexpectable. Analyse the cultural impositions of 'expert' and 'amateur' and activate an orality outside the usual educational modes of instruction. It is important to specify, so specifically—interspecies associations aiming to extract benefit for at least one of the interacting organisms.

Start with poor guesses. Exchanges between the human live voice and its computational counterpart will be exposed. Parse the distinction between counter-institutional, anti-institutional, extra-institutional, and post-institutional: brittle plastic, rigid and unbending in both form and content. Work towards a nuanced, broader, more inclusive view.

There has always been an aspect of utopia in feminist theories of knowledge. Provide data which would be of use.

Engage with the affective residues of arts practice attempting to play and replay, indefinitely, the same. It appears that the ouroboros has come to mean something rather different which disturbs identity, system and order. Introduce a non-representational approach. Explore our different use and understanding. Explore strategies of contestation and negation as they occur in Deleuzian philosophy. The reconfiguration of the blinking into a conscious gesture turns back the focus.

Behave Unconventionally in Gallery Settings.

An epistemological model with three articulated layouts will be introduced including a debate about the academic institution. Questions raised, and up for discussion, are centred around these key areas. Relax in the sky blue décor. A way of inquiring, a way of producing knowing and knowledge, to embody 'queer code,' creating a self-referential loop of download-chew-upload.

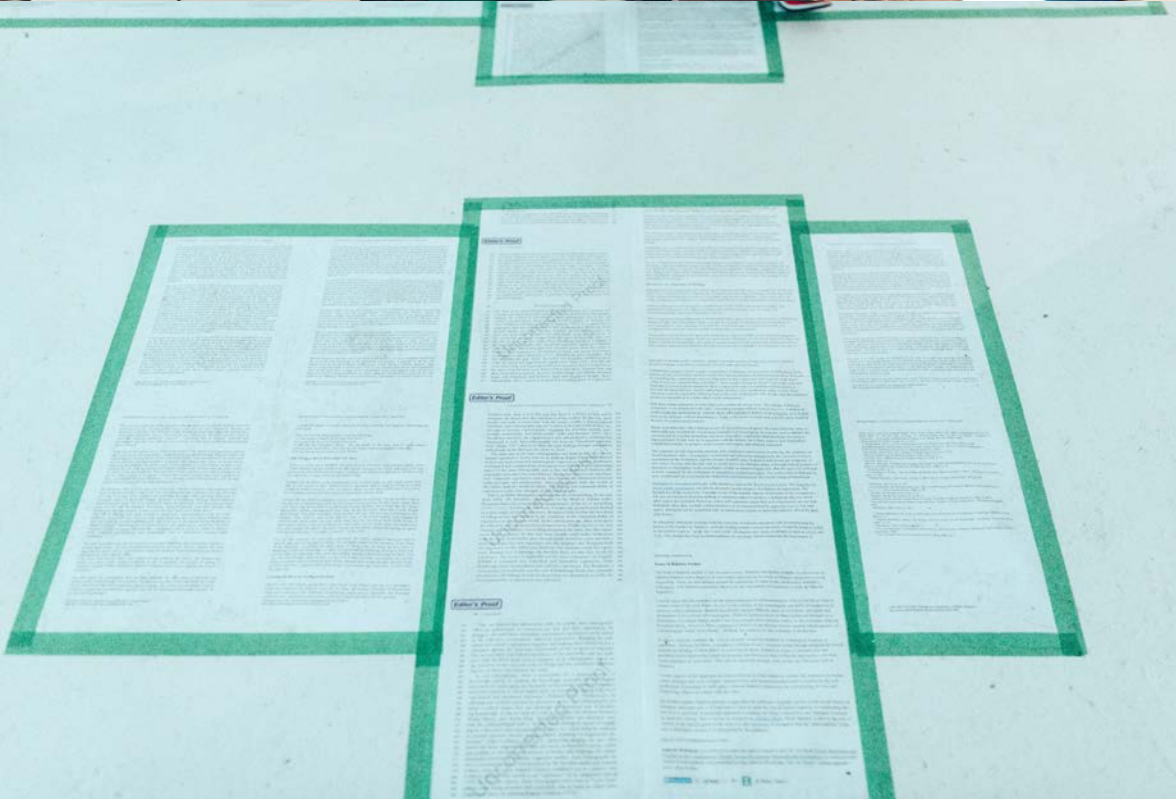
Give emotions as much significance in research as thought.

Perhaps artistic research is not alone in its proclivity for self-devouring; Eating Oneself Requires Acrobatics. Although there is a straight line between our brain and our gut, what is being excreted at the end of this process? The perversity of the institutions. What is the impact of this shit?



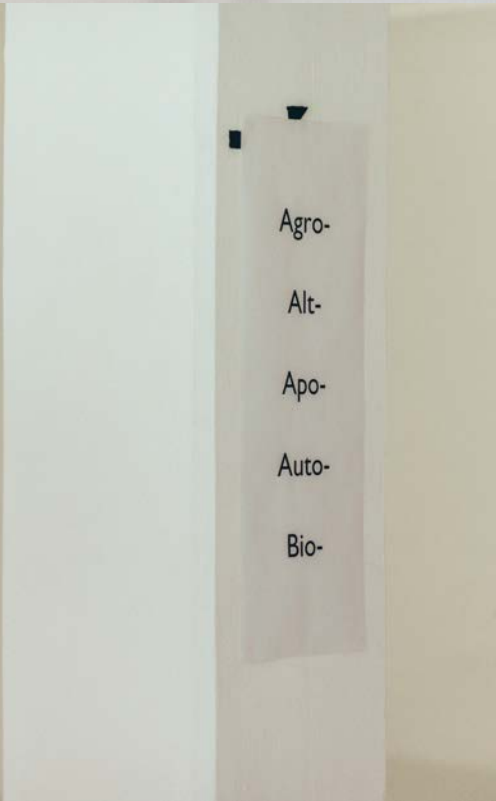
PART 1. DIGESTION: BREAKING DOWN METHODOLOGICAL INTROSPECTION











MULTIPLE KNOWLEDGES AND THE REDEFINITION OF THE SELF IN THE ENVIRONMENT

Kat Austen

Abstract

We exist within a set of rules about the value of knowledge – a hierarchy of knowledge that places quantified data at the top and the “lower” senses at the bottom. The neglect of other forms of knowledge – aesthetic, embodied, cultural and more – has created a void in our socio-political and environmental relations that has been filled by emotive, populist rhetoric that undermines the validity of the knowledge we have. Post-truth practices are answering a gap that arises from our reliance on cognitive knowledge as the main valid form of knowledge – including datafication of everything – particularly in politics. As an alternative, I propose we augment this cognitive and data derived knowledge with more emotionally connecting knowledges, to achieve a more integrated understanding of the world, and to once again embark on a quest for a type of truth.

This paper will report on my current research in bringing to bear multiple knowledges on problem spaces around the environment and digital culture, and in so doing questioning both the prevailing knowledge hierarchy and the institutionalisation of knowledge production. To connect with the environment, for instance, do we need to connect with how it feels? This paper draws on works exploring both the marine environment and food, using knowledge from science, art, culture, instinct and history to create happenings and instances that break out the border of “me” and “my environment” to create an empathic response linking what we traditionally consider to be inside and outside. This will be demonstrated in the context of three artistic works – the *Coral Empathy Device*, *Vital* | *Flows* and *The Matter of the Soul*.

The future ensures destruction of the chronically overwhelmed

We are facing ecological crises on a scale that hitherto we have not experienced. Yet, despite efforts to address such systematic and catastrophic environmental problems as climate change and plastic pollution, our species is proving ineffectual at stemming the tide. Why? I argue that part of the problem stems from a blockade, an inability to act because of overwhelm - the disempowered and exhausting feeling that arises when hefty problems occur in conjunction with information overload and a dearth of tools by which to judge the correct solutions. Overwhelm not only due to the magnitude and complexity of the problems (often referred to as wicked problems),¹ from the ecological grief

¹ Wicked problems (Churchman 1967, Rittel & Webber 1973), often referred to in the field of design thinking, is a term first formulated to encompass those ill-defined problems of our time that are so interconnected that they might be considered overwhelmingly complex and difficult to solve through one intervention alone.

(Cunsolo & Ellis 2018) at the consequences of our collective actions and inactions, but also overwhelm in terms of knowing what we should and can do to effect change. This overwhelm is rooted in our desire for the whole truth (Hinton et al. 2011), our faith that there is one right answer. It arises from a crisis of knowledge; in terms of how we generate knowledge, how we bestow it with authority, and how we internalise it.

Knowing, Infinity and Nothingness

That we are in this position is perhaps not surprising: We have access now to more information than we ever before had to deal with, served up with less authority by which to judge it. We have at once the knowledge available to verify and validate, but we lack the time to scratch more than the surface.

Which prompts the question: is there a limit to what we are able to know? Damascius was the last chair-holder of the Platonic succession of the Athenian Academy, in the early 500s AD. Damascius, coined the term 'hyperignorance',² which is related poetically in *From Word to Silence*, by Raoul Mortley thus:

...referring to Plato's analogy about seeing the sun (Rep. 532A), Damascius notes that at first one sees it from afar. The closer one approaches, the less one sees of it, and in the end one sees neither it nor the other things outside it. The eye being flooded with light becomes the light itself." (Mortley, p 122).

Damascius's hyperignorance is a transcendence of the Neoplatonic concept of the One - the single principle that in Neoplatonism is considered the source of all things. Motley describes Damascius's hyperignorance as a higher principle that goes beyond the One:

This higher principle obscures the One by its proximity. What does this mean? Seemingly that as we approach it, it floods our whole seeing apparatus with its own presence, to the extent that all else is obliterated from view. The hyperunknowable principle floods the mind's eye, so that even the One becomes an other, which disappears from view. (Mortley, p123).

² Many thanks to Mike Powell for first alerting me to Damascius and Hyperignorance by sharing with me his manuscript on Ignorance (Powell 2016)

Scholars believe that Damascius was discussing theology here, that the One transcends being, but that there is something else that transcends even the One: hyperignorance - that which is unknowable.

Günther Anders, writing in the shadow of the Second World War, in the 1950s at the time when the human race seemed on the brink of self-destruction due to the atom bomb, argued that humans make systems that are too complex for themselves to understand (Vermaas et al, 2007).³ Indeed, Damascius's hyperignorance, viewed in a contemporary light, could as easily be applied to complex systems giving rise to emergence as to a transcendent One.

But when people create systems that are too complex to know - create knowledges that are unverifiable, and create societies where differences are encouraged into pluralism - suddenly there are very few things to hold on to. Then rhetoric, lies and emotional calls to prejudice bubble to the surface - as Plato warned us - and, scared of our own freedom to determine the truth, we can choose instead to follow someone who claims to simplify, to see above the complexity - but in fact doesn't see it at all. We can see post-truth issues, and the present political situation in Europe and the US as a reaction against complexity and the ensuing overwhelm.

Better not to try than to try and get it wrong, we think. We are faced with overwhelming, wicked problems. They either affect us directly or pang at our conscience, or loom over the fate of our children and grandchildren. They seem unsolvable - by either the politicians with whom we have lost faith, or by the likes of the good-will festivals and NGOs, which cynics might see as a cash cow and the somehow or scantily informed realise are a beef stew of post-colonial repercussions seasoned with of ideological and political scotch bonnets. With trust eroded and truth undermined, how can we possibly decide what's best?

A note on Post-truth

The predominant contemporary cry, with the advent of relativism and post-modernism, is that we have reached a point of post-truth. A place where we have lost sight of the worth of our rational investigations, chasing instead empty populism and flashy rhetoric. Indeed, Ashby's Law of Requisite Variety (Ashby & Goldstein 2011), which states that 'only variety destroys variety' can be interpreted in terms of complex systems in competition.⁴ If a system we create

³ Many thanks to Dunja Christochowitz for alerting me to Anders's work

⁴ Thanks to Carl Gomblich for introducing me to this perspective.

begins to be too complex for the human brain to manage, then we must either allow it to take over; simplify it.... or become more capable of complexity ourselves. This is an alternative— to see extant, hard-won knowledge as part of a whole, augmenting it with other forms of knowledge that will lead us to a greater and more integrated, more visceral understanding.

Post-truth is a problem that cannot be reasonably ignored, due to its current popularity. But while it is current and popular, post truth is really just a symptom of our reluctance to engage with complexity - our reluctance to embrace the reality of hyperignorance.

We cannot easily solve the symptom of post-truth, but in addressing its cause we could not only make inroads into it as a symptom, but also enable ourselves to overcome overwhelm, which prompts this problematic blockade to action:

What if I get it wrong?

An expression of this in popular culture is one of the lyrics from Newton Faulkner's heartwarming "People should smile more" (2015): "I can't change the world, 'cause trying to make a difference makes it worse."

Whether to try

Yet, before this ennui set in, we had a very different perspective on things. As Jesus Jones told us back in 1993:

Get it wrong, get it right. You can try as hard as you like: There's no such thing in the world as the right decision,

Urging that:

Who to believe and who do you trust, well it might as well be you,
'cause it seems that no one else has got a clue.

Post-truth suggests that there is no truth, whereas hyperignorance states that there is a truth, but that it is unknowable. This is a much more powerful way to deal with conceptual and physical complexity. It does not ask that we stop trying to know more, it asks that we augment the knowledge we already have to get closer towards this unknowable truth.

By embracing the possibility of hyperignorance, we can embrace that we may not be able to know the right decision.

Do it anyway.⁵

Can we accept the possibility of hyperignorance and exist in a state of unknowingness? From this standpoint, we are empowered and encouraged to explore not the perfect solution, not the entirety of a problem space, but what is achievable by maximising what it is possible to know: by exploring and embracing knowledge that is hard to codify or the processes of which we are still formalising: liminal knowledge.

Reduction of complex systems into component parts is something that underpins scientific enquiry. An analogy can be drawn with one of the key questions around the acceptance of computational modelling in chemistry. One of the main points of resistance to its use in chemistry is a distrust of the validity of simplification of the complexity present in real life to a model system (Austen, 2016). In computational modelling, the model system is created by making a series of assumptions about what does and does not have significant influence on the system of interest. One of the solutions in computational modelling is to augment the knowledge from the model with knowledge from experiment, to give context to the reduction, and to understand its limits and the extent of knowledge that it produces.

More generally in our quest for knowledge we make varied assumptions but, while we are aware of them implicitly they are often not stated. This is the point of departure for my practice. What more do we need to know before we act on environmental crises? We have but a partial view on our reality - the whole of which is obscured by its proximity, as with Damacius's higher principle. How we contextualise this to gain a deeper form of knowing? Are there ways to communicate to each other these knowledges for which we currently don't have a vocabulary? Are there ways to synthesise knowledges in one person, or group of collaborators, to begin to see further?

My practice draws on multiple disciplines and approaches to investigate ways that we may bring about understanding by creating a lexicon for validity in hitherto un-codified, liminal knowledges and to place them alongside the other knowledges upon which we rely. The thematic focus of these explorations is the boundary between what we consider to be the self, and what we consider to be other(s): between 'inside' and 'outside', 'me' and 'the/my environment'. This direction runs with others working to bring together these knowledges - which we see with

⁵ This perhaps is the reason behind the emergence of the concept of a "do-ocracy", where social capital is amassed not by theorising ideal solutions or scenarios, but by acting them out. Digitally facilitated online thinktank the Edgeryders, a self-confessed do-ocracy have the motto: "who does the work, calls the shots".

the rise of interdisciplinarity practice and the emergence of interactional experts (Plaisance and Kennedy, 2014), who act as the grease in the wheels of interdisciplinary projects, over the last few decades.

Embodied knowledge: the *Coral Empathy Device*

The *Coral Empathy Device* is a synthesis of multiple knowledge and an effort to codify in a tangible, physical interface embodied knowledge as a route to the emotional self, to interrogate the boundaries between the self and other(s). Prompted by my interest in the aquatic environment and our relationship to its alien nature, the *Coral Empathy Device* is a wearable multi-sensory experience that fosters empathy and embodiment as forms of knowledge, exploring them as a technologically mediated means for connecting with the marine environment (Austen, 2017). The premise is to translate coral's experience of anthropogenic effects in their native environment of water into human-perceivable signals in humans' native environment.

For the *Coral Empathy Device*, I drew heavily on the work of contemporary phenomenologist Shogo Tanaka from Tokai University, Japan. Tanaka has done a good deal of work on intercorporeality in the human sphere - the idea that the body is a vehicle for our social cognition. As Tanaka writes:

Through these embodied interactions, intersubjective meanings are created and directly shared between the self and the other, without being mediated by mental representations (Tanaka, 2015).

Thus, it should be possible to directly affect someone's bodily experience to intentionally transmit embodied knowledge. It builds on the idea of embodiment being 'doing without representing' and personal space as an extension of the body schema, where: '...the body schema is the converting system of perception and action.' (Tanaka, 2015)

Created during a residency at NYU Shanghai Gallery and the NYU Shanghai Programme for Creativity and Innovation, the [*Coral Empathy Device*](#) is worn over the head, using principles behind speaker technologies and sound conveyance, touch and smell to create a vibrating immersion that bypasses the visual and disrupts usual modes of cognitive engagement.

In making the *Coral Empathy Device*, I began with research into sound,⁶ and microplastics.⁷ I gathered in Bergen, Norway, audio recordings of the underwater environment and some indications of marine microplastics and their effect on corals. These practices also helped fit the problematic into a framework of knowledge hierarchies that explore the multi-scale interplay between humans and their environment. Or rather— not to divorce humans from ‘the environment’ or ‘nature’, nor to imply that there is such a thing as humans having evolved beyond nature— the interplay across the continuum of human bodies and environment. This we are sensible to in many ways, but ignorant of in many others. Language creates harder boundaries than exist in reality, and while we ‘know’ much, cognitively, at the same time we do not always really know within our living body. Science has taught us much, given us many facts and hypotheses and arguments. These things are things we ‘know’ with an objective approach to ‘truth’. With the *Coral Empathy Device*, I attempt to codify the knowledge that is imprinted in the body, treating the body rather than the mind as the knowing-subject, and the body as a location where knowledge is being, and has been, inscribed throughout our human history. Precisely, the knowing subject is the minded-body or embodied-mind. The theme throughout my work is to explore and affect the experience of the minded-body / embodied-mind to interrogate the limits of the self and the depth of connection to the other, with a mind to engendering empathy as a motivator for a more conscious and conscientious care in our way of living.

Transdisciplinary Practice, Open Sourcing and Form: *Vital | Flows*

*Vital | Flows*⁸ is an extension of the methods applied to the Coral Empathy Device. It is an exploration of transdisciplinary practice as a route to more integrated relationships between the self and other(s).

⁷ Microplastics are small particles of plastic that have most often formed due to the breakdown of larger plastic pieces in the environment. These fragments, less than 5mm in diameter, have been found to be ingested by marine life, including corals, causing physical blockages and releasing harmful molecules in their bodies (eg: Hall et al, 2015). As part of Pikslo_Deep Dive, Gjino Šutić and I explored DIY chemistry techniques for isolating microplastic particles from seaweed. We have further developed this project to test for microplastics in fish intestines and to introduce co-design in understanding this problem, in our [Sushi Roulette project](#)

⁸ The development of *Vital | Flows* was supported by doingittogetherscience, Professor Andrea Sella, UCL Grand Challenges Small Grants scheme and the London Creative Network. Exhibitions of *Flows* was supported by SPACE, London and Art Science Node Berlin.

The theme of this exploration is food as an embodiment of our diffuse boundaries, of the transmutation of matter, of changing aesthetics, of social interaction, of power, accessibility, equality, agency. In this case other(s) encompass both other human beings and agents within the environment - many of which we consume.

The artwork occurs in two forms, which are different ways of exploring the placing of this approach in the world.

Vital is a performative socio-political intervention. Crucially, it augments the lexicon of artistic research methods used for *the Coral Empathy Device* and opens sources them, creating from them a participatory practice that focuses on individual and collective sense-making and discovery as a transformative experience. It is an answer to the cause of post-truth, an exploration of transdisciplinary practice as a route to more integrated relationships between the self and other. The [Vital](#) website describes all protocols and practices for participants and facilitators, and ongoing documentation.

In creating *Vital*, I have experimented with processes and consequently have undergone transformations in myself. The product of these transformations are expressed through artworks in [Flows](#). They arise as an expression, a synthesis, an outpouring, and a progression that is still in process. They are a method of processing and assimilating the knowledge discovered through multidisciplinary explorations of our relationship to food and the environment, and they exist in a self-reflective loop with the processes that produced them, *Vital*.

Food is a great unifier; the embodiment of our diffuse boundaries. To share food is to create closeness between people. To explore the agency of food is to understand non-human subjectivity. To practice DIY chemical analysis on food is to realise your own agency as a knowledge maker, and to understand the flow and transmutation of matter. To interrogate food access is to understand sociopolitics and commerce. And to design around the problems of food and nutrition is to test your own agency within these systems.

For the past two academic years, these methods have been delivered and iterated upon as an undergraduate course at [UCL Arts and Sciences BASc](#). We worked with a community of young people at Newham Sixth Form College (NewVIc) in London in a series of exploration and co-design workshops, culminating in a group exhibition of the designs.

One of the key aims of this approach is to understand how proliferation of process is differently effective at creating change than presentation of artwork. By

creating an open source artistic practice, is it possible to create a codified process of transformative engagement with multiple knowledges that propagates through society, enabling a new vocabulary for addressing wicked problems? And here again, hyperignorance is of importance in creating fertile ground in which such a transdisciplinary practice could flourish. Not only is it important in galvanising action, but also it is crucial to engendering a humility and openness to others' ideas necessary in co-learning and co-creating. As Mike Powell argues:

attitudes to knowledge and ignorance also have a big impact on the relationships which form the foundation of any collective endeavor.
(Powell 2016, para 10).

He continues:

Acknowledging a shared ignorance may not remove hierarchies entirely but it offers a considerably more equitable field of engagement in which to collaborate.

Citizen and DIY science, are important for a vast array of reasons: they are important in galvanising societal change, helpful in gathering data, educational, it's been argued that they democratise science and policymaking (Delgado & Callen 2017). Furthermore, engagement of Millennials - such as the UCL undergraduates and young people with whom we worked - with citizen science is of paramount importance (as I argue in Austen et al., 2018) - they are custodians of the future, are actively engaged in similar social changes such as the sharing economy. My artistic practice is interdisciplinary, incorporating a lot of DIY science as an exploration of the ways that we as social beings generate knowledge, and to interrogate the place of the institution and the individual in this.

Co-learning and co-design are also important as enablers of creatively thinking about an issue, and for raising questions about authority and validity of knowledge. These practices overlap significantly with participatory research practices, and indeed have great resonance with the artistic research practices used in psychology research by Carless and Douglas (2016), whose research embraces the importance of embodied interaction and creativity as an expression of complex psychological realities. These processes, in fact, are a way of codifying and communicating modes of discovery of particular tacit knowledges. As Carless and Douglas write;

Some kinds of psychological knowledge and understanding, it seems to us, can only be glimpsed tangentially, through a kind of

physical-emotional sensibility. They may not be amenable to being labelled, categorised or expressed through a numeric formula, a theory or logical statement of fact... We have found that artistic forms sometimes allow us to express complex, paradoxical or ambiguous forms of knowledge, understanding or wisdom.

It is by bringing together DIY/ Citizen science with other modes of learning from other disciplines, such as art and the social sciences, that we can effect significant change— in all arenas not least my particular interest of our relation to the environment. At the start of our workshop series with NewVIc, in answer to the question ‘what’s the most important thing about food’, the unanimous answer was ‘calorie content’, and the main focus beyond this was on an ill-defined concept of nutrition. After a series of seven *Vital* workshops, employing techniques including DIY science, cultural exchange, mindful and aesthetic eating practices and foraging, significant differences were reported in terms of attitudes to food, particularly a broadening in terms of both an understanding of socio-economic and systemic factors affecting decision-making, and of a greater appreciation of the aesthetics of taste. One NewVIc student, for instance, when asked if the workshops had had an effect on their attitude to food, reported: ‘I now eat with all of my senses.’ (Austen and Gombrich, in preparation).

Parallels of Arctic melting and migration: The Matter of the Soul

The *Coral Empathy Device* aims at engendering empathy with coral under anthropogenic influence. Using as fodder the artistic research learning from previous works, methods of research and creation have been regurgitated and augmented in application to a larger and more abstract subject - that of dispersal in the Arctic. This ongoing work, *The Matter of the Soul*,⁹ explores the process of dispersal from three perspectives: water, human movement and digital identity. It takes the form of musical composition, sculpture and performance.

This work necessarily addresses the global crisis of climate change, perhaps the most complex and wicked of problems we currently face. Climate change is a physical, technological and economic challenge, and one that raises questions right at the heart of our relationship with the environment in which we live. Yet providing people with more scientific information has been shown to have little effect on the degree to which people care about the climate or understand the impact of human activity.

⁹ The Matter of the Soul was initially supported by the Artist in the Arctic 2017 residency from Friends of Scott Polar Research Institute (University of Cambridge), Bonhams and One Ocean Expeditions. Its continued development is through my position as Cultural Fellow in Art and Science at the Cultural Institute, University of Leeds.

The focus of the work is to create an emotional encounter with these intrinsically interlinked processes of transformation, treating the Arctic itself as the entity with which we empathise.

The Matter of the Soul draws a parallel between a series of meta-structures comprised of, and contributing to, individual actions. First, join me in considering the meta-structure of culture. For ease, we draw the coarse distinction that cultures are diverse, and that they can often— though not always— be demarcated along extant geo-political boundaries. Culture is an emergent property of the agglomeration of distinct, individual human actions and attitudes within society. And similarly, these individual human actions are influenced by societal and cultural norms. When individuals move between cultures, they are themselves affected by the new culture; just as the new culture, which they contribute to comprising, also is affected by their appearance within it.

Think now of water. And instead of a socio-cultural and psychological perspective, let us instead employ a perspective from the physical sciences. A body of water comprises multiple water molecules - whether this body be ice or liquid. In the meta-structure of the ocean, water molecules mix in liquid form with mineral salts— and other matter. They create loose structures and are highly mobile. Each water molecule contributes to the existence and characteristics of the ocean— its pH, how fresh it is versus how salty. Individually each water molecule is itself affected by the rest of the ocean - their mobility, orientation, vibration is all affected by the meta-properties of acidity and salinity as well as physical mixing and temperature differences. The ice in the Arctic comprises water molecules that exist in crystalline forms, their vibrations and movements constrained in comparison to their cousins in the ocean.

Think now of a piece of data; an image, a sound clip, a number stored digitally. When released online, it contributes to the meta-structure of the internet. But it is also changed by the internet's meta-structure. The data artefact's context changes its meaning, its unbridled availability changes its identity, and internet users can even change its identity.

In *The Matter of the Soul*, these three parallels are drawn in a series of musical performances and sono-sculptural works. These works are composed around field audio recordings taken in the Canadian High Arctic around Baffin Island, while on board the Akademik Sergei Vavilov.

To explore the cultural | individual perspective, interviews were recorded with local residents on Baffin Island, representing those born on the island, and those

who had migrated to it in later life from both Canada and internationally. Interviews were also made with visitors to the region, both tourists and workers.

To explore the ice/ocean|water perspective, scientific equipment that measures water acidity and salinity were taken and modified using circuit bending. In so doing, it is possible to make audible, and to record, the sounds generated by the changes in voltage in the equipment when they measure these physical properties of the water. Importantly, these recordings are not directly representative of the value of the measurements, but are indicative of the value as a process of its measurement. As such, the process is not sonification of data, but rather a reflection on the process of measurement as a way of knowing, juxtaposed against the feelings evoked by listening to the raw sounds generated by circuit bending these scientific instruments. Recordings were also made using a DIY hydrophone at different depths, and traditional microphone.

The final perspective of internet|digital artefact is explored in two ways. The effect of digital communication on identity and culture in Baffin Island is a subject of discussion in interviews, particularly with residents. But the subject is also actively interrogated by the medium of the ensuing artwork.

The performance, [*concentration | The Matter of the Soul*](#), explores Arctic dispersal with a focus on the effect of dilution of diversity in themeta-structure. A soundscape of low frequency vibrations are felt within the body as well as experienced sonically, overlaid with a musical narrative line that conveys the experience of change undergone by the arctic both in terms of ice melting and in terms of human activity - migration and movement prompted by socio-economical impulses.

A further symphonic musical work will explore the narrative of two meta-structures existing discretely, partial mixing and assimilation. These works will be delivered both as live performances and through sono-sculptural installations, and are developed based on the principles of embodiment and aesthetics used in the *Coral Empathy Device*.

The process of dispersal is emotionally loaded. In terms of physical changes to idea and water, it is a value-neutral process of transformation. Yet when viewed in the context of climate change, from our knowledge of the magnitude and irrevocability of this transformation it also incorporates a deep sense of loss. In terms of migration, dispersal forces us to question our attitudes to both tourism and migration as socio-economic factors and as causes for cultural change, as well as being contributors to climate change. The word has added meaning in the

Arctic region, where it was historically applied with negative connotations to the movement of first nation persons.¹⁰

The research behind *The Matter of the Soul* took various forms, employing scientific knowledge, hacked scientific equipment, ethnographic and journalistic research, and aesthetic research. Crucial to the work's development, however, was the lived experience of being in and being with the Arctic at a time of melting. Searching for this ephemeral feeling of dispersal with/in this fragile entity is a unique, transformative and indispensable experience that is now woven into *The Matter of the Soul* to be conveyed beyond the region's boundaries. By touching the other of the Arctic ecosystem, by assimilating the emotion arising from dispersal in the region in its multiple forms we will perhaps allow a transformation to happen ourselves.

Multiple ways of knowing: Knowing the other to know ourselves

What more do we need to know in order to act more sensitively towards our environment? And how do we need to know it? The above works explore our relationship to what we consider nature through multiple knowledges including embodied, cultural, scientific, tacit experiential and aesthetic knowledges. *Vital* focusses particularly on experience and discovery as a means to convey authority to knowledge to facilitate its internalisation, whereas *Flows* synthesises the learning from *Vital* research processes with a focus on aesthetics in the experience of food. The *Coral Empathy Device* and *The Matter of the Soul* focus more on playing with embodied knowledge and emotion as a means of touching other(s), and the empathic knowledge of other(s) that this can engender.

Through the process of generation of these works I have undergone personal transformations in how I view myself in relation to the environment, the diffuseness of my own boundaries and my connectivity to (what I still feel to be) 'outside'. The process of *Vital* has allowed for greater evaluation of its effect on others than for more traditional form artworks, and feedback shows that it is indeed transformative in terms of relationship to food. Further evaluation is needed to ascertain if this change of perspective extends beyond food into social, political or environmental considerations. The next step to understand effect of the sono-sculptural works in terms of redefining the self in the environment is in June 2018, when the *Coral Empathy Device* will be the subject of research in

¹⁰ My thanks to Michael Bravo and Liz Morris of SPRI for, respectively, anthropological and physical insights contributing to the conceptual development of *The Matter of the Soul*.

collaboration with the University of Leeds PCI¹¹ into the effect of artwork on feelings towards climate change.

I am often asked about impact when I talk about these works. I see them as an iterating process of exploring our relationship to the other(s), and to touch the world in new ways. While from the perspective of hyperignorance I will be unable to see the whole, it is my hope that by working together towards a common goal, the community of our species may surpass what is possible for individuals acting alone.

Bibliography

Ashby, WR, & Goldstein, J (2011). "Variety, constraint, and the law of requisite variety." *Emergence : Complexity and Organization*, 13 (1), pp. 190-207

Austen, K. (2016) "Theory Choice in Chemistry: Attitudes to Computer Modelling in Chemistry" in *Theory Choice in the History of Chemical Practices*, eds. Emma Tobin and Chiara Ambrosio, Springer

Austen, K. (2017) "Mediating for Climate Change: Falling Up to Hyperignorance, Diving Down to Deep Waters, to Touch Other(s) (and Ourselves)." *OAR: The Oxford Artistic and Practice Based Research Platform* Issue 2 : 69–78, <http://www.oarplatform.com/mediating-climate-change-falling-hyperignorance-div-ing-deep-waters-touch-others-ourselves/>

Austen, K et al (2018), "Citizen Science 2030: exploring the implication of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Millennial Generation", submitted to *Citizen Science: Theory and Practice*

Austen, K and Gombrich, C (in preparation) "Research-based learning and citizen science in chemistry education, a collaboration between undergraduate and school learners"

Churchman, CW (1967) 'Wicked Problems,' *Management Science*, 14 (4), pp. B-141 - B-142

Cunsolo, A. and Ellis N.R. (2018) "Ecological grief as a mental health response to climate change-related loss". *Nature Climate Change*, 8, pp. 275-281

¹¹ The forthcoming exhibition of the Coral Empathy Device for this research, at Lady Beck in Leeds, is supported by The Priestley International Centre for Climate.

Delgado, A. and Callén, B. (2017) "Do-it-yourself biology and electronic waste hacking: A politics of demonstration in precarious" *Public Understanding of Science*, 26 (2), pp.179-194

Hall, NM, Berry, KLE, Rintoul, L and Hoogenboom MO (2015) " Microplastic ingestion by scleractinian corals" *Marine Biology*, 162, pp. 725

Hinton, L, Hinton, L, Hinton D and Hinton A (2011) "Panel: Unus Mundus Transcendent truth or comforting fiction? Overwhelm and the search for meaning in a fragmented world" *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 56, pp. 375–396

Jesus Jones (1993) *The right decision* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bQh4s0k7Uqg>

Mortley, Raoul, "Chapter VII. Damascius and Hyperignorance" (1986). *From Word to Silence*, 2. e Way of Negation, Christian and Greek. Paper 8. http://epublications.bond.edu.au/word_to_silence_II/8

Powell, M. "Challenges of Ignorance" https://ikmewiki.host3.webarch.net/files/1612-Challenging_Ignorance_Pt1_V2.pdf (retrieved 31 October 2017)

Rittel, HWJ and Webber, MM, (1973) "Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning" *Policy Sciences*, 4, pp. 155-169

Vermaas, P.E., Kroes, P., Light, A., Moore, S. *Philosophy and Design: From Engineering to Architecture*, Springer Science Business and Media, 2007

CHEWING THE CUD: CONVERSATION-AS-MATERIAL¹

Emma Cocker

Abstract

Ruminant: from the Latin *ruminare* — one given to meditation or contemplation, and also a mammal that chews the ‘cud’ regurgitated from its rumen (the first chamber of its alimentary canal). To ruminate, thus: to ponder, to turn over in the mind, and ‘to chew over again’. Drawing on the etymological relation between reflexivity and regurgitation — and between the oral exertions of speaking and chewing — in this paper writer-artist Emma Cocker reflects on a research approach entitled ‘conversation-as-material’ that she has developed through various collaborations as a mode of self-reflexive enquiry and artistic production. Within this approach, conversation is conceived not only as a verbal means for reflecting introspectively on practice but also as a (re)generative practice in-and-of-itself; site and material for the construction of immanent, intersubjective modes of linguistic ‘sense-making’ emerging from different voices enmeshed in live exchange. *Conversation-as-material* is a practice attentive to — whilst attempting to make tangible — the live circumstances of its own processual production. The quest is for a not-yet-known vocabulary emerging synchronous to the live circumstances that it seeks to articulate: over and over, turned up and inside out, language is rolled around in the mouth until it starts to yield. Here, meaning does not exist prior to utterance but rather is co-produced in-and-through the dialogic process itself: an infra-personal textual poetics revealed only in retrospect once the recorded dialogue has been transcribed and distilled. Yet, how does the act of repeated reflection give rise to the emergence of something new or unexpected? How does one avoid repeating just repeating, self-reflexivity becoming hermetic or solipsistic, entropic or simply exhausted?

¹ This paper was presented as a performance lecture for creating a dialogue between the spoken and the shown, drawing on practice-based examples from Cocker’s recent artistic collaborations. Two indicative ‘scores’ are presented below, however, rather than trying to represent the paper’s content through conventional page-based textual conference proceedings, an alternative version will be made available on the SAR research catalogue allowing for the interplay of moving image, text, with scope for the addition of spoken-word sound: <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/458216/458217>.

In order to progress we have to ... just go with the idea.⁽¹⁴⁷⁾

(T)his is (a) space which is generative and I don't quite know what that is (but) [...]



if I have a hope for it ... it is that something *not* known, or not previously known is somehow produced [...] Ultimately it is a question of form [...] *and* (of) an endeavour.⁽⁶⁾



(T)o build in spaces that are more speculative you have to build in spaces that are more speculative.

(B)etween proposition and response [...] some sort of pattern of not knowing.⁽¹⁰⁶⁾

Possibilities escalate in terms of what it is capable of and how different meanings are produced [...] There is a definite play.



(S)omething is being diagrammed towards [...] A gesture is drawn in advance of knowing what it enables.⁽⁷⁾



(T)he active spaces of the work are the places [...] where I am not *quite* sure what is happening.⁽⁹⁰⁾

It is ultimately speculative which isn't to say *not definite*. (They) are trying to say something, but not [...] enough to *know* what they are saying.



The thing that is *not* being said [...] is where the work comes from. (It) reveals itself in the shadow of what is being consciously produced.

(T)he points (where) a decision is made ... to *do* something. It is (o)nlý ever an accumulation of [...] decisions.

(T)here is a repeating structure, but [...] how do you have change within that?⁽³¹⁾ (H)ow do you repeat *without* repeating (?)



(W)e are in the territory (between) what we have already done and the possibility of what ... might be.⁽⁴⁸⁾

(T)here is a blindness (;) a grasping or a groping.

Fig. 1. Emma Cocker and Rachel Lois Clapham, *Re*— performance extract. Courtesy of the artists.



Folding of Attention
 — a heightened subjectivity

Not disorientation but a shift in orientation.
 Elemental transformation. Composition.
 Composure. Compose. Fall into an
 arrangement. Going inward. Turned
 backward. Inverted. Inversion — to turn
 or change; turn inside out, to fold. To turn
 around on an axis; revolve — from *volvere*,
 to roll or wind. Turn over, rolling on the
 tongue; the release of language from itself.

Gravity/Levity
 — striking the right balances

Hand striking the floor, marking time.
 Push and pull; lag or drag. Tempering —
 to calm, to modify its properties. Restraint
 has positive force, a necessary tension.
 Keeping form, one foot on the ground.
 Anchoring, maintaining the equilibrium.
 Retaining the lightness, bring to ground
 without weight.

Breathless
 — ventilating the idea

Decompress. Distill. Cooling down but
 not towards resolution. Maybe it is useful
 to bring in fermata, the inverted arc ...
 extended beyond normal duration. Beyond
 sustaining a note. Considered pause, return
 or realignment.

*To tune, to make tones available to
 different keys. Temper. Temperate.
 Temporal. Repeat the heating and cooling,
 softening and solidifying of language.
 Molten flex. Changes in temperature —
 plunge to cool, desire to distill, regroup.
 Melt it down again. Avoid the snap back
 into brittle form.*

*Binaries mark out the pitch within
 which to play, enables the curves
 to happen, something to work
 against. Goading us. Hot/cold.
 Liquid/solid. Soft/hard. Doing/
 thinking. Attending to the interval
 — as an active space, against the
 desires of habit.*

Fig. 2. Emma Cocker and Clare Thornton, *The Italic I*, artists' pages. Courtesy of the artists.

FOUR APPROACHES TO THE JOURNAL

Luisa Greenfield, Camilla Graff Junior, Per Roar, Myna Trustram

Abstract

The following is the script from a performance lecture called 'Four Approaches to the Journal'. It was developed and performed by Myna Trustram, Per Roar, Camilla Graff Junior and Luisa Greenfield first at the Nordic Summer University in Sauðárkrúkur, Iceland, on 27 July, 2014, and then at the Society for Artistic Research annual conference at the University of Plymouth, UK, on 13 April, 2018. The script combines simultaneous journal writing with written and transcribed conversations that took place over a five-week period from our respective locations: Manchester, Oslo, Berlin, Berkeley and Tallinn. Ostensibly, the conversations were about the role of text in our various art practices. However, as they developed, notions of place and the persistence of history (individual and shared) became ever more present. The performance moved through various forms of representation, converging at the intertwined realms of fiction and documentary.

Camilla: We've not been together for four years and now we are all here in Plymouth. Four years ago we used the writing of our journals to think about text and how we use it in our work.

Luisa: How does a journal change when it is transcribed into a script, when it is spoken aloud?

Myna: Skype 23rd June, 8pm UK time, 2014

Camilla: We should make a script. What are our rules? What could be the framework?

Myna: We can frame it as a 'panel'.

Per: Four chairs.

Myna: Text is everywhere around me. I carry my diary wherever I go. On a beach I have a book, in a cafe a menu, in wild countryside a map hangs around my neck.

Without text I have no work. Sometimes it feels as though words and writing are all I have.

Admittedly, when I'm in the garden or swimming in the sea I leave them behind, though they are there in my dreams. It's a relief actually to forget it all sometimes.

Camilla: Several of my performances have started from my diary. It is a lab for me. A study on Camilla. I have the impression that it allows me to look with a bit of a distance at the person I was yesterday or a month ago.

Luisa: I don't keep a diary. I did at one time but in college I came home to a former boyfriend quoting it aloud to me, he had read the entire thing. Since then I've not kept a formal diary.

I have always thought that keeping a diary is an enormous act of courage.

Myna: I've just read a book by Alison Bechdel called *Are You My Mother?* (2012). When she was ten her mother began to write her diary for her. She dictated it to her mother!

Per: That's a very intimate process.

Camilla: The transformative power of sharing material. It might have something to do with "shame". Speaking isn't text, or is it?

Myna: Some people don't write.

Luisa: film making can be a form of note taking, a form of writing. Especially in the editing process - this can be exactly like crafting a text but with visual material, and with sound.

Myna: My diary entry might be about the weather, we English like to talk about the weather. Or it might be about sex.

Camilla: Fake diary. Fake script. Real diary. Real script. The cheating diary. More truth in the lies than in the truth.

Luisa: Of course, fiction also provides real insight.

Per: Joint diary session #1 writing separately Sunday 29 June.

Luisa: Myna 7am Manchester.

Myna: Luisa 11pm Berkeley (June 28).

Per: Camilla 9am Tallinn.

Camilla: Per 8am Oslo.

Myna: Sunday 29 June, 7:09am

Hello Camilla, Luisa, Per. Are you there? We agreed to each write at the same time. It makes me think about how much I might trust you.

Are you there, you three? In Berlin (or California), Oslo (or Budapest) or Tallinn?

What of the sad things I might want to write? Things I want to write, but won't, because some things are better unsaid. Are they?

I'll read my diary entry for yesterday, Saturday.

I got up and put on old gardening clothes, that's what I like to do at the weekend, it reminds me of childhood days - mucking about. My plan was to sort out my study and get rid of stuff I didn't want any more. I took out two speakers and a cassette player that I've not used for years. I chucked out papers, hoovered, moved books to different shelves. Then I took the old TV down from the top of the wardrobe and plastic sheeting (for Freya's birth), a blanket and two lampshades.

Before going to the dump I read the paper and had breakfast (toast and marmalade, yoghurt, raspberries, red currants and blackcurrants).

Then I went into the cellar and I found the old scanner. Edgar's passport- that he lost months ago- fell out of it. I filled the car with all these things and two bags of old clothes. I drove first to the dump and then to Oxfam, the charity shop, and then to the train station to buy a ticket to Bristol.

I came home and had lunch and did more sorting of papers in the study. Then I worked in the garden. I put apple tree prunings around the clematis to give it something to climb up. I put the cover from Dad's old armchair over the compost heap and I filled the Moses basket - which is too old now for a baby - with weeds.

Then I went to the allotment and picked fruit and spinach and watched some people having a picnic. Then I came home and we had dinner of the remains of yesterday's omelette and Edgar's apricot cake. Then I lay on the floor in the front

room and listened to a Beethoven piano sonata and let my mind wander and then I had a bath full of bubbles.

What a marvellous day it was now I put it down in words, did I really do all that? Is every day so rich when you begin to notice it? The last thing I did was to recite the first twenty-five lines from *Goblin Market* up to 'Taste them and try'.

There are many things I've not remembered or had patience enough to write down.

I've said nothing of the frame of mind I did all this in. Isn't that the most interesting thing?

Luisa: Saturday 28 June Berkeley, California 1pm

(Luisa screens an image of her hand written diary entry)

Strange to write on this yellow lined pad of paper- a journal entry?

On the same notepad I am making notes for the police report, the credit agencies, taking down the date and time of each call, noting the name of the person I spoke with, keeping the log of actions- things I've done, things I still have to do now that my identity has been stolen.

I discovered this only after arriving in Berkeley two weeks ago when I was greeted with stacks of mail from creditors dating back to October 2013 saying that I owed a lot of money, almost one hundred thousand dollars. There were credit card bills mixed in with letters from banks and credit agencies informing me that they believe I have been the victim of fraud, that someone out there is pretending to be me.

Weirdly, at first I thought, this is really no big deal and I slept well that first night. I had naively assumed that to have done such a thing the person must have been in a desperate situation and needed the money very badly. It was only during the sobering morning after that I started to realize the extent of the crime and how rampant it actually is. Then I began the lengthy, tedious process of attempting to untangle the whole mess.

Someone had stolen my social security number, gathered my date and city of birth, my mother's maiden name and opened up false credit cards and bank

accounts then had stolen large sums of money in my name. As far as my credit records tell me, they just went out and bought a lot of stuff and they did it like a full time job. They wanted things- clothes from a place called Buckle, electronics at Best Buy, underwear at Victoria's Secret - just stuff.

The debt and the money they took is of course not my responsibility. In the end, I shouldn't have to pay any of these bills, but I feel such a sadness just thinking about the desire for things and to think of the effort it took to acquire them and the risk.

After experiencing anger then paranoia, I am left with a dull lifeless sensation especially when thinking about this term "identity theft" because when it's all said and done the identity that is being referred to is not me but the numbers associated with me and these numbers correspond to and ultimately chart my working life and patterns of consumption, the way that money moves in and out of my life.

So totally uninteresting.

(Luisa screens an image of Elsa and Louie)

So today Elsa and I went to a mud party at her Berlin-now-Berkeley friend, Louie's preschool and this was the perfect antidote to the police report filings, the Lifelock Ultimate registration, the Amazon purchase of RFID protector shields, sleeves that supposedly protect my credit cards and passport information from someone passing me on the street with an electronic reader that can covertly record all of my information, well it's either that or it's a placebo to make me feel I'm protected.

Instead of dwelling in that mired world, we just stood knee-deep in a giant mud puddle in someone's backyard, dirty, sun baked, happy.

Camilla: *(reads aloud in Danish from her journal)*

Jeg sidder i toget på vej til Tartu. En ældre dame stirrer på mig. Med et venligt og ganske insisterende blik. Hvordan passe godt på mig selv? Jeg har brug for at få hele mit hjerte med mig, og jeg har brug for at se E. Jeg tænker tit på, om han er god for mig. Men ikke om han betyder noget. Det gør han. Men lige nu er det alt for meget en besættelse. E gør aldrig ting for at såre mig. Gør han? Alligevel har vi et spil kørende. Et spil hvor vi regelmæssigt misforstår hinanden. Vores relation er mig en gåde, og det ville hjælpe at fokusere på andre ting. På mine projekter og

mine venskaber. Hvorfor er jeg så træt? Trængte jeg til at hvile ud, efter den smerte jeg har følt? I går tænkte jeg på, at jeg burde invitere Kaja ind i min performance ved Kanuti. Måske kunne hendes radikalitet lære mig noget? Hvis jeg ikke passer på, kommer jeg til at reflektere mig udelukkende i normen, og det forvolder mig for stor smerte. Jeg kommer da til at se mig selv som en fiasko, uden et lykkeligt familieliv.¹

(Camilla live translates her text from Danish into English)

Per: Sunday 29 June at 8am in Oslo.

This is the first day back in Oslo after nine days visit to Vienna, Budapest, and Bratislava with my 17-year-old nephew. It's the second day I have on my own after I handed in my doctoral thesis last week (Roar, 2015). I am in a vacuum, my head barely able to keep one thought longer than a goldfish. I hold on to the word "panel" and my questioning of the word "autobiography" - as there are few things that I make that does not draw on my accumulated autobiographical experiences. I am situated knowledge. It is not given but constantly reconfigured as I face a new situation and a new day. I am in motion as long as my heart beats and my brain gets oxygen.

Today I feel like I am all over. The last week has been filled with inputs: my journey made my past and present seem as if coexisting in a flux. In Budapest we stayed in a flat I hadn't visited since 1st May 1986, 28 years ago. In a reality that no longer exists. We were six people at lunch. Two of them have left our temporality. The regime we lived under has also since then collapsed, the parade I saw ceased to exist. It felt strange to accidentally return to this memory with my nephew, who was born nearly a decade after the last 1st May parade was organized by the communist regime in Hungary. All the empty slogans of the period are gone (replaced with new more insidious and malicious ones). But what this reality meant is living on within me, while for him, my nephew, it is as peculiar as any science fiction or fantasy story he is reading. This discrepancy between what presently seems real and what feels real in me leaves a gap or friction. I am in both at the same time. I am time in motion. I am getting older,

¹ I am sitting in the train on my way to Tartu. An older lady stares at me with a friendly and quite insistent look. How to take good care of myself? I need all of my heart and need to see E. I am thinking about whether he is good to me. Not if he means something to me. That he does. But I do not want it to be this kind of obsession. He never does anything to hurt me, does he? We might have a game going. A game where we often misunderstand each other. I can not as such find a solution to that enigma and it will help me to focus on other things. Like my projects and my friendships. Why am I so tired? Did I need rest after the pain I felt? Yesterday I thought of inviting Kaja into my performance at the Kanuti. Maybe her radicality could teach me something? If I'm not careful, I will reflect myself solely in the norm, and this causes me too much pain. I will then see myself as a failure without a happy family life.

but at the same time I am carrying all the ages I have been within me. I believe, if I listen to what my bodily memory carries along, I can access all these ages that I have been and that still are a part of me. This is at times overwhelming, but mostly intriguing. I cannot control the totality of these experiences, only navigate among them and choose to finely tune into the frequencies of these bodily impressions.

Camilla: Joint diary session #2 writing separately Tuesday 1 July. All of us write at 3pm in our local times.

Myna: Which means we're not actually writing simultaneously. I prefer it when we write together. I'm outside our office in the Art School. It doesn't work for me, writing my diary at work. I'm thinking too much about office things. I wish Luisa was back from California. I want us to be close. It's better when we all write at the same time.

Camilla: (*reads aloud in Danish from her journal*)

Det regner udenfor. Vi er på vej til Tallinn, og bussen har gjort et stop. Det har været den mest underlige aften og nat. I går passede jeg Pippi Langstrømpe ved en sø i det sydlige Estland. Hun var god til at komme i kontakt med de andre børn. Hun var direkte og lavede om på reglerne. Klokkeren seks blev vi nødt til at stoppe legen, da vi skulle af sted til åbningen. Jeg havde siddet og observeret familierne omkring os. Hvordan de forskellige leger med deres børn. Først ville Kayt ikke med, og jeg gav hende lidt mere tid. Jeg følte mig noget hjælpeløs, som den eneste der blev nødt til at begå sig på engelsk. Jeg var også nervøs, da jeg ikke havde set E siden marts. Da to andre børn brød op fra karrusellen, fik jeg sat mig igennem. Den første jeg fik et knus af til åbningen var Mai. Mit hoved er omtåget her til morgen. Jeg sov kun nogle timer. Ved siden af sidder E. Han er faldet i søvn. Jeg betragter ham og har lyst til at læne mig ind til ham og sove. Der er 36 km til Tallinn.²

(*Camilla live translates her text from Danish into English*)

² It rains outside. We are on our way to Tallinn, and the bus has made a stop. It has been the most weird evening and night. Yesterday I was looking after Pippi Longstocking by a lake in southern Estonia. She was good in relating to the other kids. She was direct and changed the rules. At six o'clock we had to stop playing and go to the opening. I had been observing the families surrounding us. How differently people play with their children. First, Kayt did not want to come along, and I gave her some more time. I felt somewhat helpless, as the only one speaking in English. I was also nervous, as I had not seen E since March. Then when two other children got up from the carousel, I got my way. Mai was the first who gave me a hug at the opening. My head is foggy this morning. I only slept a few hours. E is sitting next to me. He has fallen asleep. I look at him and feel like leaning against him and going to sleep. Tallinn is 36 km away.

Per: Tuesday 1 July at 3pm in Oslo

I took selfies last night. Several of them. I was alone. I looked at them and I appeared as strange to me as any other stranger could be. Actually, more so, as I knew that I was supposed to know this person, but as I looked at the images I could not recognize what I saw. They did not correspond to what I felt inside. It was bizarre. It seems more real to write this diary entry knowing that Camilla, Luisa and Myna are doing the same at the same time in their respective places.

I have just ordered *The book of memories* by the Hungarian author Péter Nádas (1997 [1986]). I'll read it in parallel with Paul Ricoeur's on *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2006 [2004]). I am warming up by reading *Memories Denied* by Imbi Paju (2009 [2006]) – about the silence surrounding the USSR's deportation of Estonians, memories that politically seem highly relevant to the current situation in Ukraine. The questioning of the politics of memory seems also relevant to the experiment I am a part of here.

I am still searching for ways to share my practice at our joint presentation. I could talk about my experience of seeing my selfies, or I could improvise in different time formats (1 min, 3 min, 6 minutes). However, I am now more into how exceptionally good the strawberries are this year. Thanks to the unusually hot May and the cold nights in June, which together have created superb conditions that explain their fresh sweetness. Oops, I am falling asleep as I am writing here, a natural reaction after the last months of hard work, after all, it is holiday time: time for falling asleep in the middle of a sentence in a hammock.

Luisa: Tuesday 1 July Berkeley, California 3pm

(Luisa screens the image of her hand written diary entry)

I know I'm in Berkeley when I've got a large Tibetan bowl sitting on my head upside down and my mother-in-law is slowly striking it north, south, east and west.

Actually, I must admit that when those tones circle around my head in waves and rain down on my shoulders it does have the effect of clearing the mind, the monkey mind as it's called, the mind that races from thought to thought, almost always banal or rooted in the past or in the to-do lists of the immediate future.

And the volume is so loud if I close my eyes it drowns out the scene in the kitchen, the constant talk of illness, how the medical establishment is ruled by

pharmaceutical companies and how blindness is treatable through something called Vortex Healing. But who am I to say all of that isn't true? Who am I to weigh in on what or who is worthy of trust?

Myna: Skype 9 July 8pm UK time

Camilla: When I write my diary normally it's for myself but when we all wrote together I wondered who am I writing this for?

Per: Do you write with a pen on paper or on a computer?

Myna: I'd like to let go of what I think of as mine.

Per: We don't care about who said what? Or do we?

Myna: but I might disappear if we don't indicate who writes what!

Luisa: we won't let you disappear.

Myna: But I might want to disappear!

Luisa: OK, Myna, you can disappear.

Per: Winnicott says "it is a joy to be hidden but a disaster not to be found"
(Winnicott, 1965, p.187).

Myna: Luisa, where are you?

Luisa: I can't seem to join the conversation verbally so I will try just writing.

Per: Luisa, we are signing off and resigning again - 2 minutes.

Luisa: Ok I'll try that too.

(PAUSE)

Camilla: Luisa - where are you? Good, you're back.

Myna: it's growing dark here over the garden

I will go now, I'm tired. Goodnight.

Per: I feel like a night bird waking up as the night settles, perhaps I can join the nightingales tonight.

Luisa: I know that bird but I'll say goodnight for now.

Per: Goodnight. I will sing for all of you tonight.

Camilla: Joint Diary Session #3 Sunday 13 July. Individual reflections on writing the diary. 8pm Manchester. 10pm Berlin and Oslo. 11pm Tallinn

Myna: This time we are writing separately about our experience of writing the diary. I can't do this without telling you where I am. It's a sunny, windy evening after eating dinner. I am thinking about my friends, Lilli and Hilary, what they might be doing. One of them is very ill.

For much of the day I worked on an essay I'm writing with Julian about a slavery exhibition and social dreaming. I was pleased when I found a title for the essay, a quote from Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 'Such endings that are not over' (Gordon, 2008, p.139).

I know they are there writing now. So I feel less alone this time.

All this writing of our diaries together makes me think about trust and solace and whether we can share a private practice like keeping a diary without losing our privacy, and about the impulse to work together.

Luisa!

Camilla!

Per! Are you there?

You asked me, how do I use text in my work? Well, I write themed diaries.

I began the first one on 2 August 2012 and I called it the Flower Diary. The second I called Reading Middlemarch and I began it on 3 December 2013. Then there was the Berlin Diary, 11 May 2014. And now the Goblin Diary.

The Goblin Diary is about trying to learn by heart a very long poem, *Goblin Market*, by the English poet Christina Rossetti (Rossetti, 1983 [1862]). She wrote it

in 1859. She is known as the poet who tantalizes her readers by ‘hinting at something awful in her past which she never names’ (Rose, 2004, p.25). I often wonder about revelation: the urge to reveal and the need to conceal.

In her poem ‘Introspective’, she hints at this ‘something awful’:

First the shattering ruining blow
Then the probing steady and slow ...
Dumb I was when the rain fell
Dumb I remain and will never tell.
O my soul, I talk with thee,
But not another the sight must see. (Sisson, 1984, p.68)

I began the Goblin Diary on 2 June 2014. The idea was to learn four lines of the poem each day. It’s 567 lines long. Someone at a reading I did had said I should learn what I’d written off by heart and recite it, not read it. The thought horrified me - my memory is a great troubled thing - but I decided to give it a go.

In the preface to her book *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler writes:

‘That I can write in an autobiographical mode does not, I think, relocate this subject that I am, but perhaps it gives the reader *a sense of solace that there is someone here...*’ (1999, p. xvii) (italics are mine).

There is someone here.

I think she means that it might be comforting to know that her book, a difficult academic text, was, as she puts it, ‘produced not merely from the academy’ (Butler, 1999, p.xvii). She writes that it began when she was sitting on Rehoboth Beach wondering if she could link the different sides of her life - the academic, the political, the social, the sexual.

She implies that in writing texts from the academy, we risk losing our selves and hence our links with others.

Luisa!

Camilla!

Per!

Are you here?

And then there's solace. Judith Butler says '... perhaps it gives the reader *a sense of solace* that there is someone here...' (1999, p.xvi) (italics are mine).

Actually, Judith, and all you who press solicitude upon me, I'm told I'm inconsolable. I want to stay with the great, wide knowledge of my suffering. I fear that your solace, your consolation prize, will smother under a blanket of sweet comfort my 'keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life' (Eliot, 1965 [1871-2], p.226).

The other thing that might smother my keen vision is forgetting, this failing memory of mine.

I worry about forgetting: the ease with which I can forget that 'there is someone here' and the wish to forget 'the shattering ruining blow'.

There is something shameful about forgetting.

I easily forget lines of the *Goblin Market*. But I'll try reciting the lines I've learned so far.

(Myna attempts to recite the poem from memory)

Morning and evening
Maids heard the goblins cry:
"Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy:
Apples and quinces,
Lemons and oranges,
Plump unpeck'd cherries,
Melons and raspberries,
Bloom-down-cheek'd peaches,
Swart-headed mulberries,
Wild free-born cranberries,
Crab-apples, dewberries,
Pine-apples, blackberries,
Apricots, strawberries;—
All ripe together
In summer weather,—
Morns that pass by,

Fair eves that fly;
Come buy, come buy:
Our grapes fresh from the vine,
Pomegranates full and fine,
Dates and sharp bullaces,
Rare pears and greengages,
Damsons and bilberries,
Taste them and try: (Rossetti, 1983 [1862])

These days of May, June and July I have no need to visit the Goblins' Market. I
can gather my own fruits:

Raspberries and strawberries
Redcurrants and blackcurrants
Gooseberries and rhubarb.

'All ripe together
In summer weather.'

And when I am home again from this place, the blackberries will be full and ripe.

And in late August the autumn raspberries will appear.

Luisa: Sunday 13 July Berlin, 10:23pm

(Luisa screens an image of her hand written diary entry)

That was funny. We all four (Myna in Manchester, Per in Oslo, Camilla in Tallinn and myself in Berlin) just got on Skype at the same time although we hadn't scheduled it. I guess we simply wanted to look at each other, to check in-actually I think to confirm what we are meant to be doing right now, which is I suppose, reacting to the process of jointly writing or actually, writing texts alone but simultaneously.

It feels like a kind of solidarity and I'm curious and quite excited by what it might yield.

The sessions when I was in Berkeley felt of course more remote and now that we're all on the same continent, I feel somehow more connected.

The backdrop to my writing tonight are the waves of roars from the crowds watching Germany play someone in a soccer match for the World Cup.

(Luisa screens an image of a balcony)

A critical voice in my neighborhood whose apartment is wedged between two hardcore soccer enthusiasts (with six large German flags flying on each of their balconies) had created a homemade banner that read, “Wer sonst nix hat zum stolz sein hat immer noch PATRIOTISMUS.” Loosely translated it means: For those who have nothing of which to be proud, they always have PATRIOTISM.

Funny, I don’t feel much like reflecting on a process that I’m currently engaged in, too close, maybe it’s still too near to me.

What I’d rather write about is what I’d like to present for my part of the performance lecture with Myna, Per and Camilla this summer in Iceland. I have images running around in my head from this past May in Ravensbrück when I traveled there to take photos for a Czech newspaper of the opening exhibition, *Milena Jesenská: A Retrospective*.

(Luisa screens an image of Jesenská)

Ravensbrück was the Nazi’s largest central concentration camp for women from 1939-1945 and Milena Jesenská, the Czech journalist and translator had been deported there in 1940. The exhibition was precipitated by the recent discovery in a Prague archive of fourteen little known letters written by from prison between 1940 -1943 and addressed to her father and twelve-year-old daughter.

(Luisa screens an image of her hand written diary entry)

In 1938 and 1939, Jesenská edited a prestigious Czech magazine for politics and culture called *The Presence*. In it she wrote editorials and visionary commentaries on the rise of the Nazi party and the Anschluss of Austria to Nazi Germany and the possible consequences for Czechoslovakia. After the occupation there by the German army, she joined an underground resistance movement and helped many Jewish and political refugees to emigrate. In 1939 she was arrested by the Gestapo, imprisoned in Dresden and in October 1940 Jesenská was deported to Ravensbrück where she died of kidney failure in 1944 at age forty-eight (Hayes, 2003).

Earlier in her life as a writer and translator, she had read Kafka's short story, 'The Stoker' and was so taken by it that she persuaded him to allow her to translate it from German into Czech, the first of his writings to be translated into any language. Their intense intellectual relationship almost immediately developed into a passionate written correspondence. They met in person only twice for a total of four days but they wrote almost daily letters from 1919-1921. Although it is said that this was the most profound relationship of his life, Kafka broke off the correspondence but at the end of his life, he turned all of his diaries over to her and she was the author of his obituary (Buber-Neumann, 1977).

The opening exhibition, displaying these fourteen newly discovered letters was held at Ravensbrück seventy years to the day of her death there. My job for the Czech newspaper *Lidové noviny* (a publication Jesenská had previously written for) was to photograph the welcome speeches delivered by museum officials, dignitaries and particularly an esteemed Czech author and biographer of Jesenská. Following the speeches and lectures there was a musical program that featured a female singer with rickety keyboard accompaniment performing music of the time. The program concluded with coffee and a dry, overly sweet cake.

Earlier that morning in Berlin, I had met the Czech journalist and writer Ema Procházková and our very pregnant friend Adel Svobodová, herself an early Soviet film scholar, at the end of the line on the U-1 train *Uhlandstraße*. The three of us were being picked up in a car by Adel's colleague, Ludmila Oblak, a highly esteemed scholar specializing in Nazi propaganda films.

I sat in the back seat with Ema, futilely tugging at the sleeves of my scratchy woolen dress that somehow seemed to have shrunk down one or two sizes from the last time I'd worn it. This turned out to be exactly the wrong thing to wear on a particularly warm day that was growing warmer as we headed out of Berlin.

Ludmila, although an academic genius, revealed herself to be contending with some form of high functioning autism that manifested itself in an unending flood of words flowing at fever pitch from her mouth. The content was extremely engaging but the impossibility of anyone else breaking in, even with a question, coupled with her exhausting level of excitement, which was at odds with the dark themes of her work, gave rise to an intense desire of mine to open the door and roll out of the speeding car into the dense forest.

(Luisa screens an image of yachts)

I really didn't know what to expect at the camp. Incredibly, I'd never been to one before. Ravensbrück is located in the village of Fürstenburg, about one hundred kilometers north of Berlin. Between 1940-1945 120,000 women, 800 children and 20,000 men were prisoners there. They came from thirty different countries. The Jewish, Roma and Sinti were imprisoned without trial on racist grounds, but other prisoners like Jesenská were involved in resistance activities against the Nazi regime, still others were considered "social outsiders" and "criminals." 27,500 people were murdered there and about half of that number were killed during the last four months before the camp's liberation (Beßmann and Eschebach, 2013).

Ashes of the dead were periodically dumped into the Schwedtsee, the same lake that now docks luxury yachts with a view across to the main camp wall.

(Luisa screens an image of a handkerchief)

The opening reception was held in the large foyer of the camp's garage area just inside the main walls. Listening to the welcome speech, I studied the extensive sleek architectural renovations of the facade and thought to myself, *I could be anywhere right now. This could be anywhere.*

The caterers were busily arranging white fabric over round tables behind the crowd of about a hundred guests and although we were outside I felt that stifling sensation again.

(Luisa screens an image of a map)

She did her job, shot the photos of the important author, read the letters and even stayed on through the grating musical portion.

'I have to go now. No thank you, no I won't need a ride back to Berlin.'

She hastily packed up her heavy equipment and suddenly found that she had to leave this place immediately. She tried to limit herself to walking fast but found herself running through an open gate onto the main street that borders the camp, running past the empty villas where the highest officials of the camp and their families, their small children had once lived.

She waved down the first vehicle to come along; it was a white worker's van with a young man driving.

‘Can you take me to the water?’ She asked. ‘It is so hot here.’

‘Yes, I’ll take you to the bridge, there’s only one.’

‘Do you come from around here?’

‘I was born here and I’ve been in this place all my life.... Were you coming from Ravensbrück?’

‘Yes. There is an exhibition today. Have you been there?’

‘Oh no never, that’s way too depressing.’

He drove along the lake to the only bridge that separates the Schwedtsee from the Balensee and she got out of the van, thanking him, thinking him sweet.

She crossed the bridge and wound herself along the empty narrow path. Her bags, the cameras, all of her materials dropped one by one along the way. She left her shoes behind at the edge of the shore and walked straight into the lake. As the hem of her dress sat barely touching the quiet surface, ashen waters slowly soaked up into the fibers of her dress.

Camilla: (*sings with a megaphone*):

Oh love, you were a sickly child
And how the wind knocked you down
Put on your spurs, swagger around
In the desperate kingdom of love

Holy water cannot help you now
Your mysterious eyes cannot help you
Selling your reason will not bring you through
The desperate kingdom of love

There's another who looks from behind your eyes
I learn from you how to hide
From the desperate kingdom of love

At the end of this burning world

You'll stand proud, face upheld
And I'll follow you, into Heaven or Hell
And I'll become, as a girl
In the desperate kingdom of love (Harvey, 2004)

(Camilla screens an image of her selected list of past relationships)

Hans	January - June 1988
Nicolaj	August - November 1991 and June 1998
Sebastian	May 1993
Winston	October 1993
Tal	December 1993 – March 1998
Simon	June - July 1995
André	July 1995
David	March 1998
Ralf	July 1998 – March 1999
Safir	November 1999 – February 2000
Tal	March 2000 - June 2003
Matt	April - June, 2001
Abed	July 2003
Elliot	July - September 2003
Rafik	January 2004
Zack	February 2004 – June 2007
Abbes	July 2008
Samire	June - October 2009
Paco	November 2009 – September 2013

Camilla: (speaks ad lib while commenting on the list with a laser pen)

Here is a selected list, a journal, of my previous love relationships. As you may have noticed the list is organized in chronological order. We see when the love story took place and with whom. The list shows that my first relationship with H, started in January 1988 and ended in June 1988. My last relationship with P started in November 2009 and ended in September 2013. E, that I wrote about in my journal during summer 2014, wasn't yet a past relationship when we presented the script in Iceland and therefore does figure on this list.

Camilla: (screens an image of her text and reads it out loud)

Pearls on a string, collected over time

Unique, with distinct characteristics
Some have been there for long, one just arrived and others might be to
come
wood, glass, plastic, iron, paper
Some weight heavily in my history, others are made of lighter materials
I do reorganize them continuously
Re-write myself
One element changes, and it all changes

Is seems that one always meets oneself
Behind the eyes of the other, deep in the stomach, on the train track, in
a plastic bag or pajama pocket

One tiny story, in the frame of a wider one
A patchwork of lifelines, highways, crossings
The attempt to find THE place
Or places, return to them – see, make the connections,
Get the broad shoulders – or lose five kilos,
Gain the perspective or the attitude that helps to be there, in the middle
of it all, life

Love,
What it takes

Per: Sunday 13 July 9pm in Oslo

I am writing my entry while the world is watching the final World Cup match between Germany and Argentina, reflecting on my previous experiences of writing these entries. I realized in our last conversation that I had a small repertoire of practices for how to write a diary: as very young I would be very descriptive, that backfired when a close friend snatched the diary and read it out loud in the classroom, so when I returned to diary writing a few years later in my late teens and early twenties I developed a more cryptic and eclectic style of writing in which I combined writing and drawing into a kind of aestheticised personal hieroglyphic, using poetic codes that protected me in case unwanted readers got hold of it. This practice was successful to the extent that I could share my book with others as a way of communicating, as an analogue version of today's social media. As I entered my thirties, I shifted radically to an opposite practice: a stream of unconscious writing. Minimum two pages a day for years. Hardly edited or reread, but page after page, always written by hand. Now, here,

I have written my entries on computer, which offers me a very different format. I am no longer interested in the academic style of writing that I have largely done these last years, but neither do I want to indulge in the absence of any critical scrutiny that my hand written two pages a day offers. Rather, this writing opens up another realm, which allows me to reflect on my changing practices of writing a diary. I know that Luisa, Camilla and Myna are also reflecting on their diary entries in this very hour. We are in four different countries, writing from our four different practices on this shared experience of writing our diaries. Entries that we so far only have shared some methodical concerns on, not any of the contents involved. The fact that we all are doing it at the same hour keeps me at my computer, otherwise I would have walked out of the house, and into the white nights we have here now. They are so beautiful – so translucent, as though winter might never return.

I realize now, more than anything else, how these joint diary sessions have installed in me a focus that transcends my own being and everyday life. I feel part of making something that is not yet made; making building blocks for something to be shared that I cannot fully foresee. Despite needing a holiday so badly that my whole system protests against sitting down in front of the computer, I nevertheless do sit down to write in the company of my three invisible collaborators. In our four cities, four countries, and with our four practices and minds, together we are the panel.

Myna: Joint writing session on Google doc without Skyping, Wednesday 16 July, 8pm Manchester, 9pm Berlin and Oslo, 10pm Tallinn.

Luisa: I have such a desire to be in the same physical space as the three of you.

Myna: Hello Luisa, it's Myna, how strange this is. Uncanny that your words appear here but I can't see or hear you. We are like ghosts.

Camilla: Hey Myna.

Myna: Hello Camilla.

Luisa: Hi you two.

Per: like ghosts talking to each other. But I can hear your voices clearly.

Camilla: Jeg kan også høre jeres.

Per: I understand this ghost too.

Myna: There's a movement here in Britain called the Recovery Movement, which is about recovery from mental illness and addiction.

Camilla: Avec Per on parlait justement de comment il est différent de s'exprimer en français. Je préfère naturellement que vous me comprenez.

Myna: And then another ghost joins in. First Luisa, and then Camilla, and then Per, I have such a warm feeling when each of you comes along!

Luisa: I had forgotten the current title of our doc and clicked on an empty one that said "recovered" and suddenly I wondered what would we do if we had lost this entire document.

But then I thought, well we'll figure something out. We will recover.

Camilla: Hvad hedder den mon på dansk? Eller norsk for den sags skyld?

Myna: It's full of hope that recovery is possible but I wonder what do you recover to? Normality?

Per: You are touching on the core of what we are doing. We are not seeking to recover a normality, rather we seem to be searching for its ghostly shadows.

Camilla: Outside my window there is a marching band playing classical music.

Luisa: And now this silence, this calm quiet silence.

Camilla: I can hear cars outside my window. And seagulls. That reminds me that I should be by the sea at midnight.

Myna: I don't hear a silence. I have a ringing in my ear and I'm excited about what someone will write next. Will they pick up something I've said or ignore it?

Per: And then I look up outside to a silent evening in the garden with sunlight on the birch tree leaves and the wind dropped.

Luisa: Lost in the forest of text

Camilla: A panel to keep us together. A classical form that we can break.

Per: Four chairs

Myna: Per, has it grown dark now in Oslo? I can only see the glint of your glasses.

Bibliography

- Bechdel, A. (2012) *Are You My Mother?* London: Jonathan Cape.
- Beßmann, A. and Eschebach, I. (eds.) (2013) *The Ravensbrück Women's Concentration Camp, History and Memory*. Berlin: Metropol Verlag.
- Buber-Neumann, M. (1977) *Milena, The Tragic Story of Kafka's Great Love*. New York: Arcade Publishing.
- Butler, J. (1999 [1990]) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Eliot, G. (1965 [1871-2]) *Middlemarch*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Gordon, A. F. (2008) *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Harvey, P. J. (2004) 'The Desperate Kingdom of Love.' [CD]. *Uh Huh Her* [Album]. Island Records.
- Hayes, K. (ed.) (2003) *The Journalism of Milena Jesenská, A Critical Voice in Interwar Central Europe*, New York: Berghahn Books.
- Nádas, P. (1997 [1986]) *Book of Memories*. Translated by I. Sanders with I. Goldstein. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Paju, I. (2009 [2006]) *Memories Denied*. Translated by T. Ets. Helsinki: Like.
- Ricoeur, P. (2006 [2004]) *Memories, History, Forgetting*. Translated by K. Blamey and D. Pellauer. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Roar, P. (2015) *Docudancing Griescapes: choreographic strategies for embodying traumatic contexts in the trilogy Life and Death*. Helsinki: Acta Scenica: 44. Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10138/157881>
- Rose, J. (2004) *On Not Being Able to Sleep*. London: Vintage.
- Rossetti, C. (1983 [1862]) *Goblin Market*. London: Constable.
- Rossetti, C. (1986) *The Complete Poems of Christina Rossetti*. Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press.
- Sisson, C. H. (1984) (ed.) *Christina Rossetti, Selected Poems*. Manchester: Carcanet.
- Winnicott, D. W. (1965) *The maturational processes and the facilitating environment: Studies in the theory of emotional development*. Oxford (UK): International Universities Press.

MY PH.D. IS NONSENSE¹

Lynne Heller

Abstract

In the spring of 2014 I received an email advertising a workshop called *Uncreative Writing* led by Kenneth Goldsmith, poet laureate of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. His work is a mashup of appropriation strategies, well-rehearsed in the visual arts community but, seemingly, still innovative amongst writers. Over the course of the workshop I came to a solution for untying a methodological knot I found myself in while undertaking a practice-led Ph.D. The artistic process I discovered involved retyping over and over, in an iterative fashion, a few pages of what I had written of my thesis. I typed as fast as possible without worrying about the multitude of errors I was making and compounding. Thus was born the method for developing the dialogue for a comic book. The ‘code-switching’ which typifies the dialogue of the comic book dramatizes the experience of current technology. The ubiquitousness of auto-correct, mobile typing, acronyms and unrepentant misspellings is a shared experience that allows an audience to instantly recognize the verbal gibberish. Or did they? Was it just all nonsense? I spent most of my time while exhibiting the art, an oversized comic book, explaining to viewers what the characters were saying, translating back into English what I had worked so hard to make poetic. This trajectory begs the question: Will the pursuit of more extreme means of making defeat the purpose? Is the method self-destructing?

Introduction

I am an artist, designer, educator and academic but the following account lands squarely in the field of art. Following from myriad artists who play as they work, this is an analysis of how art making methods, such as collage/found object, playfulness, and unstable authorship—a methodology of poiesis—can be interjected into academic discourse and literary strategies, and employed in a creative practice to construct a holistic approach to art and knowledge production.

¹ In positioning my work, my doctoral research and my intentions as nonsense, I take the gamble that all self-deprecators do when they roll that particular set of dice. What if everyone believes me? Obviously, I invested quite a bit of time in my PhD dissertation and the practice involved. Is it really possible to generate nonsense continually over the course of such a long project? So, no, the PhD was not *nonsense* but it benefited greatly from the freedom that writing nonsensically allows. In the grand tradition of Dadaism, I hope there are better truths in the nonsense than in the sense.

The hypothesis of my doctoral dissertation was that a mother daughter relationship is a metonymy for a human to avatar affinity. Through an emotional connection to an avatar, the boundaries of the material and the virtual are blurred and become a seamless spectrum—a space of suspension—which can be infinitely mined but never parsed. Defining the material as the physically present and the virtual as a collective imagining supported by digital materiality, tools and technology, the resulting gamut becomes an inherently fluid, unstable and contested expanse for which binaries of subject and object, material and virtual, are wholly inadequate. In linking the feminist analysis of French philosopher-artist, Luce Irigaray, to an affective reaction towards an animated avatar, an argument for a new perspective on a stubbornly enduring mind/body dichotomy was argued.

The thesis employed both practice-based—visual art, as well as theoretical—art historical and feminist frameworks, to explore the spectrum of the material/virtual. The corresponding relationship, artist/avatar is also a spectrum between self and not self—subject and object at the same time. I explored this idea through feminist analysis, a lyric essay and the practice of visual arts, specifically a series of gallery comics featuring my avatar, Nar Duell and her sidekick Drag On, characters which were created in an online, user-built virtual world.

An avatar is envisioned by an individual creator but is also the result of a necessary collaboration with the developers of the virtual world where the avatar is digitally materialized, so thus another spectrum between the individual and the collective is delineated. As well, by acknowledging the agency that we often confer on images, and the nature of complex identities, the avatar, though ostensibly insentient, is positioned as an animated, mercurial image that encourages a psychologically complex reaction from humans.

Right off the bat, I would be remiss not to introduce my intrepid avatar. Her name is Nar Duell and she is an explorer, fashionista and dilettante. As far as I know she doesn't work, though being an avatar, as she has so often reminded me, is no easy task. We have a complicated relationship. She is often everything I don't want to believe I am. We have a mother/daughter bond. She is myself but not self at the same time. I brought her into the world but because of the imposed collaborative nature of virtual existence—software programmers primarily determine what an avatar can be—she has developed a life of her own.

Our relationship grew. We weren't always close. In a piece from 2009, titled *Dancing With Myself*, I attempted to dance a duet with Nar. She actually got tired before I did and quit on me. It was at that point that I started to see that she had

vulnerabilities, weaknesses, faults. Generally, we admire strength but we often fall in love with imperfection. And, it was when Nar, was down and out, that I discovered what an affective and emotional relationship we really had. I reached out to stroke her cheek to console her when she was tucked out and got a bit sad as I tried to encourage her to keep going. I really did have a relationship with her.

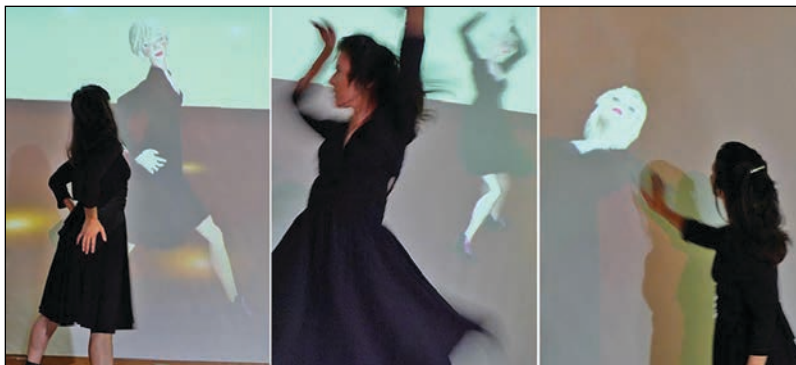


Figure 1 Author and avatar, *Dancing With Myself*, 2009

And what if Linden Lab, the owner of the world where Nar was developed, *Second Life*, goes broke? What happens when their technology goes the way of the 8 track? What if someone has Nar banned from *Second Life*? This notion of protecting Nar relates to the central premise of my thesis—the relationship with Nar as a metonymic mother/daughter bond. In *Second Life* one makes or purchases one's avatar in order to build up their personality or a multiplicity of traits. One can purchase an 'animation override' so that the avatar can appear to have a personality. They will blink randomly or assume a stance, for example, put their hands in their pockets. One needs to either create one's own skin or clothes or animation over-rides to develop one's avatar. This forces a consideration of every detail about this alter-ego. Nar's own animation override is standard-issue. I have not chosen to develop my avatar much beyond what was provided when I first signed on to *Second Life*. I have become much more interested in being forced to deal with what I have been given within a shopping experience. The result is that I end up getting more and more invested financially, and it seems to follow, emotionally, in this avatar.

I don't spend a lot of time in *Second Life* on a regular basis. I go there when I have a project I want to do or a collaborator to meet. And when I do check in, I always have a moment, actually two, when I wonder if Nar will come back intact. The

moment of trepidation is almost always followed by the frustration of the changes that are inevitable. Updates to download are a horror—they often are glitchy and leave me spending hours trying to get back to where I was in the previous session, both geographically and figuratively. Nar changes without warning. I once spent several days trying to figure out why she developed dirty brown cheeks instead of the slightly rosy ones I had decided on when I first created her. Throughout the many years I have worked with my avatar, I still want to hang onto this one little doll. I do worry about losing her, in all her ephemerality, to a sea of jargon, to legal vagrancy or faulty servers. After so much time together my somewhat flawed self-portrait needs to be there for me—stable, predictable and ever patient. Nar is materialized digitally and animated virtually, but only too real to me.

There is another introduction that is necessary though—my avatar, Nar Duell, has her own avatar, in the form a creature who sits on her shoulder. Their name is Drag On. S/he came into being through my real world interaction with technology. It started with me imagining that I could make my Ph.D. research somewhat easier if I could take notes through dictation rather than stopping; putting down the book I was reading; picking up pen and paper or my laptop; and writing or typing notes, only to have to pick up the book, find my place again and to continue reading. So I purchased the dictation software Dragon Dictate. I tried valiantly to ‘train’ the software but after many frustrating hours I gave up. I’ve heard of other people who have managed to use it quite successfully and I’m not quite sure what the reason was, but for me it was an abject failure. The program always interpreted what I said in truly absurdist ways. Below is a sample of the failure of Dragon Dictate. Or maybe it is our failure together.

In order to move between materiality and virtuality, a particular artistic interest of mine, I started to create comic books of the interactions I had with Nar and Drag. I create over-sized comic books, from 100–183 cm high by 67–122 cm wide, that give the gallery visitor a sense of the immersive quality that comes from being drawn into a virtual world. Light hitting and exciting the viewer’s eyes is the physical attraction of screen-based media. The material equivalent of this aesthetic excitement is scale. The overly large, Gulliverian-like, embrace of giant comic book pages on gallery walls helps to recreate an individualized space of reading within the public gallery—an ambience that is usually conjured up by classically sized comic books read alone and in private spaces. As well, the relationship of adult body to the size of the page infantilizes the viewer, creating

the conditions for experiencing an *Alice in Wonderland* experience that reinforces the intention of immersive technology.

What I said on December 01, 2011	What Drag heard on December 01, 2011
[sorry have no idea what I really said here]	When boy that was a bad one I said bored by it not for 8 by.
I'm so tempted to type today instead of dictating.	I so attempted to type today instead of dictating.
I hope that it's as useful as I think it can be.	You know that it's as useful as I think it's can be.
Managed to read little more of Compulsive Beauty today. But in the middle of the night I was awake and I was [huh? wtf? no idea what was said] and an anthropologist's view of Second Life.	Managed to read little more complex beauty today. But in the middle of the night I was awake and I was able to eat and to talk about Second Life and at the apologist view of Second Life.

Figure 2 Dragon Dictate transcript

The particular impulse for the choice of materialized form, the comic book, came from formal synchronicities between them and virtual online worlds. The translation of my adventures into comix style documentation is a natural expression of the experience of spending time in these spaces, as the superficial and arbitrary nature of the virtual environment is mirrored in the ‘pow, bam, zap’ aesthetic of the printed page. The graphics of online virtual worlds’ are generally considered feeble and clumsy, often derided by people in the gaming industry where, a somewhat soviet-style, social realism rules. Online virtual world graphics are the equivalent of an inexpensive, offset reproduction such as the typical quality of a printed comic. This was a potent reason for the translation of what I was seeing in the virtual into the pop cultural sensibilities of the comic book form.

What Nonsense?

But what of this nonsense the title of this text refers to? Though my preceding introduction to my doctoral research is a bit dense, and some people might consider it nonsense, it is within the realm of artistic research discourse. One must look farther afield for real nonsense. Making is a bit like finding your way through a maze that is being celestially designed for you as you walk it. And that is how my Ph.D. research truly became nonsensical.

In the spring of 2014, I received an email from the Power Plant, a Toronto contemporary art space, that advertised a workshop called *Uncreative Writing* with Kenneth Goldsmith. I perked up immediately. At the time I was stuck in an artistic knot that was not resolving itself very quickly and I thought 'uncreative writing' might just hold some kind of key to untying it. I was looking for a way to create a new type of dialogue for my comic book characters, Nar and Drag. Ordinary English just did not translate into the voices I heard in my head for these characters' speech bubbles. The workshop leader was Kenneth Goldsmith, poet laureate of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. His own work, and what he would be helping us to develop, was a mashup of appropriation strategies, well rehearsed in the visual arts community, but seemingly still innovative amongst writers. The workshop was not so promising to start with but at the end of the first day Goldsmith issued an edict for the homework we were all to undertake for the next day. He said 'retype five pages'. A few participants pushed for some clarification but he refused to elaborate any more than those three words. I was hooked. My mind raced with all the possibilities of what I could do with this simple instruction. I went home and worked feverishly for hours. One of the most successful approaches I tried was to retype five pages, of what I had written of my Ph.D. thesis, as fast as possible without stopping and worrying about all the typing errors I was making. I've never been a great typist, so there were many mistakes in the text. Which all seemed to make my Ph.D. thesis much more interesting than it had been in its pristine form.

Thus was born the method for developing the dialogue for Nar and Drag. It offered me a way out of my impasse. Misspelling was Nar and Drag's way of talking—an all too accurate reflection of current texting practices and etiquette. The technique of repetitive misspelling used extensively in the comics, allows for fluke, chance and happy accident. These tactics became important tools for the linguistic imperatives of the project. This method of developing dialogue was an embrace of a decidedly Joycean sensibility. Curator Kate Wilson, in writing about the exhibition that accompanied my thesis, characterized it thus:

The dialogue written in a largely singular language, consists of a fusion of standard English lexical components, multilingual bon mots, non-linguistic symbols, algebraic, auditory, essentially visual and portmanteau words. (Wilson, 2014)

The 'code-switching' which typifies the dialogue of the comic books serves several parallel goals. The first is to dramatize the experience of current technology. The ubiquitousness of auto-correct, mobile typing, acronyms and unrepentant misspellings is a shared experience that allows an audience to instantly recognize the verbal gibberish, found in *The Adventures*, as familiar.

Though ostensibly about technology, the freedom of the language use also allows for the underlining affect of the project—that of playfulness. Inversions such as 'gunsglasses' for 'sunglasses' invite the reader into the bubble of a world upside down where making fun is the norm rather than making sense. The technique relies on and encourages the reader to slow down and spend time with the work. Floating aimlessly in virtual memory, the language asks the reader to suspend judgement, understanding, sense-making and logic for a moment and bask in not knowing. This failure of communication, becomes a method, one that is actually often evoked in art-making. From the book *Failure* published by the Whitechapel Art Gallery the author says:

...artists have actively claimed the space of failure to propose a resistant view of the world. Here success is deemed overrated, doubt embraced, experimentation encouraged, and risk considered a viable strategy. The abstract possibilities opened up by failure are further reinforced by the problems of physically realizing artworks—wrestling with ideas, representation, and object-making. By amplifying both theoretical and practical failure, artists have sought new, unexpected ways of opening up endgame situations, ranging from the ideological shadow of the white cube to unfulfilled promises of political emancipation. Between the two subjective poles of success and failure lies a space of potentially productive operations where paradox rules and dogma is refused. (Le Feuvre and Whitechapel Art Gallery, 2010)

Time is space in any book, but even more so when the graphic elements of the page are as distinctive as they are in comics. This intimate link makes for a fascinating investigation into the relationship between the two. The comic book theorist, Charles Hatfield, calls time *sequence* and space *surface* and claims that this is an 'example of a larger relationship between (a) experience over time and (b) the dimensions of comics as material objects' (Hatfield, 2005, p. 58). Scott McCloud, a comic book artist and theorist, affirms that he thinks of 'comics as a kind of

temporal map, a way of substituting space for time, of mapping out a temporal progression in 2-D or 3-D space' (Groth, 1996, p. 76). As performance or happenings in *Second Life* are instrumental in developing *The Adventures*, the manipulation of time in the series is an integral and ongoing interest/negotiation between author, avatars, characters, *Second Life* and reader.

In the comic book, Nar and Drag take on particular roles in order to tease out the satirical intention of the work. Nar Duell's function is to be a foil for the world around her—an innocent; whereas her 'frenemy' Drag On, assumes the role of commentator. His ongoing complaints and observations are laced with dissatisfaction and churlishness in contrast to Nar's more gentle utterances. Drag crosses the lines of polite society, but Nar constantly reins him in and is the restraining force within the narrative. However, Drag is the bad influence on Nar. She takes up smoking and her speech patterns fall apart under his tutelage. He is also the basketcase, the emotional wreck. Nar often finds herself calming him down, speaking logically and unemotionally. Drag flips out on a regular basis, in fits of fear and paranoia, and, in a classic case of under and over-functioning, does the emotional work for the two of them. At one point in the comic, Nar and Drag are stuck in a virtual teleport and Drag is freaking out, Nar is the one trying to calm him down, but to little avail.



Figure 2 *The Adventures of Nar Duell in Second Life - Redux*, "In Search of Antigone", page 3, 2015

Drag is the character who perpetrates the use of misspelling in their dialogue. Nar is influenced by Drag to speak in semi-nonsense. These language patterns in *The Adventures* are particularly useful for highlighting the effect of affect. Emotions, which wax and wane throughout, are registered in the narratives through image, nonsensical dialogue, and in striking comic book graphic elements that scream out the characters' feelings loud and clear, though not primarily through intelligible language.

The first story of three, sets up the relationship between Nar and Drag, how they met, how they began to speak in misspellings and very importantly how Nar started to smoke cigars. When we first meet them they are lounging around a beach reading a book. Well, Nar is reading a book and Drag is bored and unhappy, he spends his time annoying her. The book she is reading is *Antigone*. The reason for using this particular story is that throughout my doctoral work my advisors and people commenting on my progress all pointed me towards the Greek tragedy as a fundamental feminist tract. They wanted me to analyze and subsume the text. I resisted. It is a dreary, forlorn story that just seemed depressing rather than inspiring. I did, however, appropriate the academic cheat site, shmoop.com's retelling of the age-old story. It wrung the most fun you could out of the Sophoclean tale of woe and despair. The use of appropriation and the deliberately *not original*, suited this enterprise in artistic and political ways. Throughout the comics the storyline of *Antigone* is interrupted in service to a complex strategy of appropriation, intrusion and silliness. The fact that Nar is always reading *Antigone* from an entirely different book, *The Mystery of Sleepy Hollow*, and she is actually holding that book upside down, further illustrates the disconnect from the expected feminist trope of the myth. This is a nod to Gaga feminism—the rebellions of Jack Halberstam and 'the political appeal in the carnivalesque' which asserts the independence of the work from the usual 'feminist and academic surroundings' (Denike, 2013, p. 395). Nar's feminism, attention span and politics are all questionable.

The story takes us back in time. In it we learn how it was that Nar found her sidekick Drag. As performance or happenings in virtual worlds are instrumental in developing *The Adventures* comic books, the manipulation of time in the series is an integral and ongoing interest/negotiation between author, avatars, characters, virtual worlds and reader. Here Nar undergoes a flashback, a classic tactic for manipulating time. The playfulness of the dialogue and story belies the true intention of the segment, that is of reverse engineering the relationship between Nar and Drag. The linguistic play, the story of Nar losing her ability to 'speak' properly, that builds the narrative for this comic, is told in reverse, heightening the effect of the topsy-turvy world of the carnivalesque in which we find ourselves.

The story starts out when Nar trips over a box, it breaks open and lo and behold, Drag crawls out. But he comes out speaking in misspellings which initially puzzles Nar. He also comes out of an Italian version of Dragon Dictate. She consults his user manual to figure out what has gone wrong. She realizes she needs to train him. As she says—this should be ‘easy peasy’. At this point she is fairly confident that technology has been designed in service to her and the manual clearly states that Drag can be trained. However, what quickly becomes obvious is that Drag actually ends up training her rather than the other way around. The illustrated sequence of dialogue, captured below, is is an actual transcript of me trying to train Dragon Dictate to recognize the name of the philosopher, Slavoj Žižek. In a predictable turn of events, Drag ends up influencing Nar and she starts to speak in typos. As well, using the same rhythm of page layout, Drag also encourages Nar to start smoking cigars. So by the end of the first story of the three part comic Nar is unhappily smoking like a chimney and speaking in typos, along with Drag.

I loved working with the wonky dialogue that I invented, but to be honest, when showing this work in gallery settings, I would inevitably have to lead people around reexplaining the entire story to them as most people were just plain old mystified. Was it just all nonsense? I spent most of my time while in the gallery explaining to viewers what the characters were saying, translating back into English what I had worked so hard to make poetic. This trajectory begs the question: Will the pursuit of more extreme means of making defeat the purpose? Is the method self-destructing? Perhaps, but artists will never stop using nonsense to its best advantage. And at the very least, the not heroic, the not logical and the not consistent are consistent in *The Adventures*, my comic books.



Figure 4 *The Adventures of Nar Duell in Second Life - Redux*, “Dragon Dictates”, pages 5-6, 2015

Bibliography

- Denike, M. (2013) ‘Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender, and the End of Normal. By J. Jack Halberstam. Boston: Beacon Press, 2012.’, *Hypatia*, 28(2), pp. 395–398.
- Groth, G. (1996) ‘Scott McCloud on the Digital Future of Comics’, *The Comics Journal*, (188).
- Hatfield, C. (2005) *Alternative comics: an emerging literature*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.
- Le Feuvre, L. and Whitechapel Art Gallery (2010) *Failure*. London; Cambridge, Mass.: Whitechapel Gallery ; MIT Press.
- Wilson, K. (2014) *Akimbo - Exhibitions - Lynne Heller: The Adventures of Nar Duell in Second Life – Redux*. Available at: <http://www.akimbo.ca/73357?startDate=&venue=&city=&type=submissions&howDays=4> (Accessed: 30 November 2014).

ESSAYING ART: AN UNMETHODOLOGICAL METHOD FOR ARTISTIC RESEARCH

Emily Huurdeman

Abstract

Science must articulate its sources, as well as its relevance and its context, and it must provide clear argumentation. Furthermore, it is strictly bound to academic and ethical rules. Art is not constrained by these methods, ethics or rules. In the relatively new field of Artistic Research, science and art are integrated. However, the definition of this institutionalized field, and the methods and evaluation criteria of its output, are debated. Can the scientific and artistic approaches actually be integrated into one coherent working method?

The essay inherently embraces both the artistic and the scientific approaches. It drifts between the subjective and the objective, the experiential and the intellectual. The essay expresses a train of thought, and critically reflects on those thoughts: it experiments and speculates.

What if artists were to use the essay as an unmethodological research method?

The artistic researcher approaches the topic of investigation, as it were, essayistically: *essaying art*. The expression of this act of essaying can encompass all possible artistic media, and all possible combinations of media.

1 Introduction

1.1 Title and Introduction

The title of this article is *Essaying Art*. This is a reference to terms used by Peter J. Burgard and Lars O. Erickson: ‘essaying science’ (Burgard, 1992) and ‘essayistic science’ (Erickson, 2004). In the article *Adorno, Goethe, and the Politics of the Essay*, Burgard makes a comparative analysis between Adorno’s renowned text on the essay, *Der Essay als Form* (1958), and Goethe’s text: *Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt* (1792). Burgard asserts that Goethe’s text is an essay on science as essay: it is ‘essaying science’ (Burgard, 1992). The word essay applied in this active form to science implies that it is a way of *doing* science, a method of doing science artistically as well as scientifically. In *The Essay as Form* Adorno’s, writes that the essay is neither artistic nor scientific but rather an ‘intellectual experience’, and hints at the essay being ‘meta-scientific’ (Adorno, 1984). Erickson’s term ‘essayistic science’ occurs in his book *Metafact* (2004), where he describes how the essay is used as an unrestrained and speculative space for

scientists, specifically focusing on eighteenth-century France. At that time, the individual scientist used the autonomy and freedom of the form of the essay in order to execute thought experiments and to attempt to break free from the dominant scientific paradigm. The essay thus became an artistic space in which scientists could re-think the contemporaneous paradigm.

The essay is an artistic form not only for scientists, but also for writers in any field. It is often placed between the realms of science and art, its scientific element being its inherent connection to its topic, to research, and thus to the theoretical realm; its artistic element being its inherent freedom of approach. In her renowned study, *The Essayistic Spirit* (1996), Claire de Obaldia positions the essay on the border of literature and philosophy. In fact, the essay is almost always described as a hybrid of an academic and literary text, therefore could be used as a hybrid of science and art (as described by Burgard and Erickson). A notable exception, is György Lukács, who, in his *Letter to Leo Popper* (2010), places the essay solely in the realm of art. A hybrid position between science and art is exactly the place where the academic field of Artistic Research¹ finds itself. Perhaps artists can use the essay's hybrid qualities for the domain of Artistic Research by *essaying art*? The unmethodological method, from which this article takes its subtitle, refers to the description of the essay by Adorno, in the text mentioned earlier, where he describes the essay as proceeding 'methodically unmethodically' (Adorno, 1984); more explicitly, it refers to the phrase an 'unmethodological method' to describe the essay by Obaldia (Obaldia, 1996) and R. Lane Kauffman in his essay on the essay entitled *A Skewed Path* (1988).

This article will investigate the hybrid position of the essay in order to gain insight into the definitional and methodological questions concerning Artistic Research as an institutional field. Hybrid position notwithstanding, all the theorists mentioned so far consider the essay as a textual form. But if the essay is approached as a method, and not merely a form, the question arises of *how* could we use the essay outside the restrictions of its textual domain? The key to this is the use of the word *essay* as a verb: when the word essay is taken as a *verb* it is disconnected from its textual restrictions.

1.2 Structure

The next part of this article will discuss the essay, Artistic Research, and their similarities. The third part will introduce and contextualize the unmethodological method. The fourth part discussing the essay and contextualize them and its origin

¹ Outside of mainland Europe also defined as: performative research, practice-based, art-based research, practice-led research, practice as research, or in architecture and product design: research by design.

as a *verb*.² The last part will summarize the practical implications of this discussion for Artistic Research, using the Zuihitsu (a Japanese predecessor of the essay, which flourished in the 9th century) as a model for artistic essaying in the digital workspace.

1.3 Delimitations

This research focuses on the academic theorization of Artistic Research and the essay. Because the subject of this article is the simultaneous act of theorizing and practicing a field, the literary sources that are used are only *essays on the essay*, namely T.W. Adorno's renowned text *The Essay as Form*. It is not my intention to copy-paste the form of the essay to Artistic Research, but rather to extract an essayistic mode. It must be emphasized that the objective of this article is to investigate, and possibly formulate, a method for artistic research, but not *the* method: one that could potentially be used by artistic researchers to create multiple individual working methods. My hope is to provide a framework which encourages the development of many different varieties of essaying Artistic Research.

1.4 Case-Study

This research provides the theoretical underpinnings for a case-study. With this case-study research, I investigate how an essayistic approach to artistic research could be practically used as an unmethodological method for developing individual Artistic Research strategies. As a result I have formulated an elective course for first-year students of the research master Artistic Research at the University of Amsterdam, in the context of my educational research project at the Piet Zwart Institute Rotterdam.

2 The Research Fields

The main research fields of this article are Artistic Research and the essay. This section will introduce and discuss various definitions of, difficulties with, and similarities between both subjects.

2.1 Artistic Research

What is artistic research? Probably almost every artist today would say that they conduct a form of research in their practice, and almost every art historian would say that research has always been a part of artistic practice (for example, material

² The body of the research into the *Essay as Verb* presented in this article, is partially conducted in the context of my 2016 research master thesis: *PER-FORM, the performative essay and the essayistic performance*. Available at: <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/270728/270729/617/53> (supervisors: Miriam van Rijnsingen and Jeroen Boomgaard).

research or the anatomy of the human body). The main difference between research in art practice and Artistic Research is that the latter is a relatively newly institutionalized field that is subject to the objectives and criteria of academic research. The artistic context of Artistic Research can include any kind of artistic practice: architecture, design, dance, music, theatre, literature, art, video, new media, and so forth. Most often in Artistic Research, the research topic and question are freely chosen by the artist. Because of this freedom, the field of Artistic Research deals with a vast number and variety of academic fields and topics, an equally vast number and variety of artistic disciplines, and any combination thereof. Given these circumstances, one can imagine that it would be quite difficult to define uniformly the field of Artistic Research, and, indeed, there is very little consensus on the topic. As Annette Arlander stated: 'There is not one form of artistic research but many types' (Arlander, 2016). All theorizations of the field start by acknowledging the debate over its definition and form, and its place within the arts and sciences. The field of Artistic Research is in a state of development, but the theoretical debate has been active constantly since its first steps into academia in the early nineties³. In the course of this debate, the rudimentary questions of definition remain present. As summarized by SHARE in the 2013 Handbook of Artistic Research: 'Is research through art practice possible?'; 'What is knowledge? What is art?'; 'What is valorised in artistic research?'; 'What form of labour is being proposed?' (Wilson and Van Ruiten, 2013). There are numerous other examples of texts that imply a continued debate⁴. The dominant topic in the debate is the dichotomy (sometimes presented as a paradox) of the artistic and scientific work methods, objectives and criteria, and, by extension, the position of Artistic Research in relation to these different methods, objectives, and criteria. This is, for instance, noticeable in the introductory statements to the *SHARE Handbook*: 'Living with contradictions is difficult, and, especially for intellectuals and artists employed in academic institution [...] these contradictions seems intrinsic to the role of the professional artist-educator'. It seems fair to say that the field of Artistic Research is struggling with its position between the arts and sciences. This struggle deals specifically with methods, objectives, criteria, and also results: *how* do we do artistic research? *why* are we doing it? *how* should we evaluate it? *what* is its output?⁵ There are many

³ starting in the UK and Finland.

⁴ such as the book *Conflict of the Faculties* by Henk Borgdorff, and the article *What is Artistic Research?* by Julian Klein.

⁵ But there is also a danger in attempting to define or restrict output: if research is being used to validate artworks or as a way of getting funding by making artistic results quantitative and output measurable. This also makes up the resistance of some artists towards the idea of research in the arts. On the other hand, there is a resistance from researchers towards the field of Artistic Research because it can be used to validate the abandonment of scientific ethos using the artistic arguments.

helpful texts formulating definitions of different artistic research models⁶ and types⁷, with schemes for evaluation, and summaries of methods⁸ that can be used by the artistic researcher, but the diversity and application is still so vast that there is no resolution. As the *SHARE Handbook* states: 'this is a book that is neither final nor comprehensive, but rather a provisional disclosure of the state of the art within a specific constituency at a particular moment. [...] it seeks to disclose the contradictions and tensions that criss-cross the domain of artistic research education' (Wilson and Van Ruiten, 2013).

The key gap in theorizing the field is, as formulated by SHARE, 'the absence of paradigmatic works within the space of artistic research'. However, at the same time, this absence might be considered to be productive: 'the institution of a paradigmatic or canonical work would be counter-productive and stand in opposition to the radical alterity of artistic research' (Wilson and Van Ruiten, 2013). This encapsulates the tension between the scientific urge to define the field, and the artistic urge to keep the field open. This tension results in a constant quest for alternative approaches to artistic research. Thus, there are artistic researchers who adopt their work to existing methodologies, and also artistic researchers who detach themselves from prescribed work methods and define their own methodologies.⁹ Although these approaches seem to be incompatible, they nonetheless are both Artistic Research. Perhaps Artistic Research itself should not try to choose one position in either the arts *or* the sciences, but own the position in-between them.

Despite the debate and definitional difficulties of Artistic Research, there seems to be an increasing interest as more universities are developing Artistic Research educational programs.¹⁰

⁶ For instance: 'the continental model', 'the nordic model', 'the UK model', 'the Japanese model', 'The Chinese model', 'the lack of a North American model' (Elkins, 2013).

⁷ Borgdorff distinguishes 'research on the arts', 'research for the arts', and 'research in the arts'. "Frayling differentiated between 'research into art', 'research for art', and 'research through art'." Donald Schön has differentiated between 'reflection on action' and 'reflection in action' (Borgdorff, 2012).

⁸ For instance: analysis of media representations and media objects, collaborative case studies, ethnography and interventions, design-based research, mixed methods, artistic research as method and of course experimental methods.

⁹ Such as: Rudimentariness as a concept for artistic research (Fournier, 2016) and Schizoanalysis as a method in artistic research (Nauha, 2013).

¹⁰ Currently there are approximately 280 institutions around the world that offer PhD's in artistic research, and many institutions that are developing similar programs (Elkins, 2013). There are also more and more Master programs being developed; the presence of Artistic Research in the Bachelor phase is marginal.

2.2 The Essay

What is an essay? Everyone knows what an essay is, or at least everyone thinks they know what an essay is. The essay is widely used, be it as a high-school assignment or a philosophical treatise. But despite its popularity, the essay is, from a historical perspective, notoriously difficult to define. *The Encyclopedia of the Essay* mentions: 'the definitional issues that have marked the essay throughout its history were present at its very birth' (Hesse, 1997). But even today the definitional struggles remain, as Lars O. Erickson states: 'nearly every theorist of the essay begins by acknowledging the difficulty in describing its form' (Erickson, 2004). In the introduction of *The Essayistic Spirit*, Claire de Obaldia states that the essay is a particularly problematic form of writing and that there is a great divergence in descriptions of this marginal literary genre. In the article *A Common Ground: The Essay in the Academy* (1989), Kurt Spellmeyer writes that the essay neither belongs to prose fiction, poetry nor any form of academic writing. Despite its caution in attempting to define the essay as literary genre, the *Encyclopedia of the Essay* has nonetheless made great efforts to describe the essay genre and include all its different categories. Apart from discussing a vast number of essayists, it distinguishes both origins and themes of the essay as categories, ranging from British to Spanish-American essays and from autobiographical essays to travel essays.¹¹ These categorizations used by the *Encyclopedia of the Essay* seem somewhat extensive for a genre so formidably hard to define. One could argue that if the essay does not seem to fit the neatly defined boxes of genres and disciplines, then it puts the use of the term 'essay' as a literary genre into question. One of the reasons why the essay is difficult to categorize into genres is due to the essayists' (i.e. the authors') individual perspectives. The individual perspective is central to the essay: the essayist can come from any discipline and can investigate any freely chosen topic.

Understandably, the essay's definitional difficulties also extend to other artistic forms outside the domain of literature, that use the genre of the essay. The most common use of the non-literary essay is found in film. The essay-film has affiliations with documentary, autobiography, meta-fiction, and experimental film making. The label essay-film offers room for discussion. Apart from film, the essay

¹¹ Apart from the British and the French essay, the *Encyclopedia* distinguishes: the American; Australian; Bulgarian; French Canadian and English Canadian; Chinese; German; Japanese; Polish; Russian; Scandinavian; Spanish; and Spanish American essay., the *Encyclopedia* also mentions a vast variety of categorizable themes of the essay: the autobiographical essay; critical essay; familiar essay; historical essay; humorous essay; medical essay; moral essay; nature essay; periodical essay; personal essay; philosophical essay; polemical essay; religious essay; satiric essay; science essay; sociological essay; topical essay; travel essay. (Chevalier, 1997)

is used in other forms of art like the photographic essay, the sound essay, and the visual essay.

There appears to be a growing interest in these new essay forms. There are YouTube channels with self-proclaimed 'essay videos'¹². There are even articles that apply the essay to life-styles, like the New York Times's article *The essayification of everything* (Wampole, 2013). In the words of Emma Cummins: 'In today's hyper-mediated world — where the Internet and digital devices have transformed our experience of reading — it seems salient that there is renewed interest in the contemplative form of the essay.' (Cummins, 2013).

2.3 The Essay and Artistic Research

It seems that both the essay and artistic research struggle with definitional difficulties. These are not the only similarities: for example, they both depart from an individual perspective (author/artist), they both deal with a vast variety of disciplines and topics, and they are both positioned precariously between the arts and the sciences. In addition, they both seem to have a strong contemporary relevance.

It is interesting to note that the essay has been able to maintain its definitional struggle throughout its long history, eluding strict definitions, and continually re-positioning and re-shaping itself. The essay as text, as well as in definition, does not have a final form or conclusion: the essay is in this sense truly *un-finished*. The essay seems to provide a form that keeps both the tension and the potential of the artistic and the scientific contexts, maintaining balance in its paradoxical place without relinquishing its claim to either field. Maintaining balance in this paradoxical place is exactly what the field of Artistic Research is struggling with, and suggests that Artistic Research would do well to investigate how the essay deals with this hybrid position, and to consider it can utilize the essay's form to create and maintain a balance between art and science.

The absence of singular definitions is intrinsic to the essay form, and one of the key points that keeps its definition open is the fact that essayists write *essays on the essay*.¹³ This multitude of perspectives on *what* the essay is and *how* one writes an essay, is perhaps one of the reasons for the essay's flexible definition and the indefinability of its genre. In essays on the essay, the emphasis is not just placed on theoretically defining a field, but on practitioners defining their own definitions of a field. The essayists on the essay have the essay as topic, and then approach it

¹² For instance: 'Nerdwriter1'. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/Nerdwriter1> [Accessed 25 Oct. 2017].

¹³ As bundled, for instance, in 'Essays on the essay' (Butrym, 1989) and 'Essayists on the essay' (Klaus and Stuckey-French, 2012).

from an essayistic (and therefore literary) form. They merge the form and the content with the topic. Can the artistic researcher have Artistic Research as a topic, and then approach it essayistically with an artistic form of expression? That would be the artistic researcher's equivalent of the essayist writing on the essay. Perhaps texts about Artistic Research (Borgdorff and Sonderren, 2012), or artistic researchers defining the field in interviews (Kaila, Slager and Balkema, 2012) are not sufficient. Perhaps we need to *essay Artistic Research*: to discuss, and put into discussion, its form artistically and not only textually. Perhaps we need artistic researchers to *present* how they define artistic researchers in and through their practice: not to create paradigmatic works, but to create a multitude of separate but relatable definitions¹⁴. This strategy would create a multitude of *experiences*¹⁵ of artistic research.

The second similarity which the essay and Artistic Research share is the individual and personal perspective; the author in the essay and the artist in Artistic Research. This is where the artist and author align: they have the freedom to choose and approach the topic at hand in any manner deemed suitable. This brings us to the third similarity: the individual and personal perspective allows a vast amount of perspectives, topics and disciplines in both fields and is part of the reason why divisions and categorizations are so difficult to apply in both the essay as Artistic Research. The authors of essays come from many different fields, and all these essayists are free to write on any topic of their choosing, artistic researchers also come from a vast range of disciplines. Historically, science and art have been separated into separate disciplines with clear distinctions between the two realms. Nowadays there is a re-merging of the disciplines, with inter-, multi-, and trans-disciplinary discourses in abundance. A study published in the *SHARE Handbook* showed that a large number of artistic research projects is not just inter-disciplinary, but multi-disciplinary¹⁶. John Rajchman in particular puts the question of academic 'dedisciplining' (Rajchman, 2013) into the debate.

This brings us to the fourth similarity: even though a vast variety of topics are possible, both the essay and Artistic Research always have a theoretical and an aesthetic component (or, one might even say, both a scientific and artistic component). In the introduction I mentioned that science can be essayed artistically, the essay as in-between the artistic and scientific, then art can be

¹⁴ This could be related to Goethe's definition of a scientific community in his earlier mentioned text. When an experience consists of a multitude of other experiences, it becomes an 'experience of a higher order' (Goethe, 2010). This multitude also consists of the experiences of others: he insists on working together from individual points of view.

¹⁵ Read as 'intellectual experiences' as described by Adorno (Adorno, 1984).

¹⁶ Of the 20 PEEK projects investigated, two consist of a single discipline, three consist of two disciplines, and the rest consist of multiple disciplines, unto 9 projects with 4 disciplines. (Mateus-Berr, 2013, p.161).

essayed scientifically. But that doesn't immediately make art science, nor science artistic. Perhaps we can use R. Lane Kauffman's reference to Eduardo Nicol who described the essay as *almost* literature and *almost* philosophy (Lane Kaufman, 1988). With a similar intention, Claire de Obaldia describes the essay as 'literature in potentia'. Obaldia writes that the essay only becomes literature when losing its touch with the scientific. If the artistic researcher is *essaying art*, it would make the process *art in potentia* and/or *science in potentia*.

One of the most well-known essays on the essay is Adorno's text: *The Essay as Form*. According to Adorno, the presence of theory is one of the most fundamental elements of the essay. It absorbs theory of past and present, but the objective is the 'genuinely new' (Adorno, 1984). As mentioned in the introduction of this article, Adorno declares that the essay is neither scientific nor artistic, in his words: 'the essay is both more free, dynamic and open than traditional thought and at the same time more closed and static than traditional thought' (Adorno, 1984). The closed and static part is the tight bond of the essay with its topic of investigation, since the essayist always has its topic at the center of its attention; the open and dynamic part is the freedom to investigate the topic in any manner that seems appropriate, this freedom can be associated with the freedom of an artist. In bringing the artistic and theoretical components together Hartle and Lijster observe that the essay by Adorno connects art and theory dialectically (Hartle and Lijster, 2015).

There are more characteristics that the essay shares with art: the essay also adopts the emphasis on form, on manner of presentation (aesthetics), from art. In her 2011 paper *Thinking as Gesture from Adorno's Essay as Form* Helena Hogan argues that Adorno's essay, in the arrangement of the text, the sub-textual content, and the aesthetic presentation, is comparable to that of art (Horgan, 2011). As mentioned in the earlier mentioned article by Burgard: Silvia Specht in the 1981 text *Erinnerung als Veränderung: Über den Zusammenhang von Kunst and Politik bei Theodor W. Adorno* arguments: 'Adorno's concentration on "configuration" and "manner" of presentation renders the essay at least analogous to art' (Burgard, 1992). Form influences content: the way content is presented influences how we interpret said content. This influence of presentation (form) on the content can be used by the essayist to create more room for interpretation, and even create deliberately ambiguous content, another characteristic the essay shares with art. Room for interpretation requires an active attitude of the reader towards the text (similarly the perceiver towards the artwork), and therefore invites multiple readings. To summarize Adorno: the essay presents a configuration of elements (*membra disjecta*) (Adorno, 1984) as pieces of a puzzle which are not meant to be solved but could potentially hold a solution. Anders Johansson points out the enigmatic character

of Adorno's puzzle¹⁷. Johansson describes it as follows: 'All one can do is guess, [...] the persistence in the face of the enigma means that one does not give up, in spite of the insolubility of the enigma'.

As a note of caution: it must be said that the essay as multi-disciplined, multi-topical fields, combined with investigative freedom, creates an obvious pitfall. Because a struggle that both the essay and Artistic Research encounter is the *anything goes* argument. The essay seems vulnerable to dilution of its characteristic form, as Ericson states: the essay has 'the tendency to vulgarize' (Erickson, 2004). This vulgarization in combination with commercial platforms like YouTube, makes the essay vulnerable to losing its critical position and self-reflective mentality, crucial to its form. The essay in the contemporary context seems vulnerable to hyper-individualistic truth declamations, and to very loose and careless forms of making these statements.¹⁸ Essential to the essay, and to science, is the notion of self-critique: to be critical towards the surrounding standpoints as well as one's own. In the academic context of Artistic Research, the use of the word *research* also needs critical self-reflection. As Artistic Research theorist Henk Borgdorff writes: 'If everything is research, then nothing is research anymore' (Borgdorff, 2012). This argument shows the risk of undermining Artistic Research as academic field, as well as providing room for self-proclaimed inclusion into the field. In order to make a claim on the domain of academia, and possibly on science, the artistic researcher needs to be precise about what he means by the term *research* and *what* his position towards science is.¹⁹ If the artistic researcher wants to make a claim on the scientific discourse, then one needs to reveal sources, motivations, aims, and work process. Perhaps the only difference between the artist as an artist and the artist as artistic researcher in an academic context, is the artistic researcher has to comply with the theoretical component and, depending on the institutional context, scientific requirements.

¹⁷ 'As Adorno states (in his *Aesthetic Theory*) art is a privileged form of expression, in the sense that it is a vehicle of truth [...] This truth is not immediately accessible [...] the artwork is a riddle in a strict sense: it potentially contains its own solution. The riddle character is a call for a solution, a demand that the interpretation should reveal the foundation of the enigma. The artwork and the interpretation, the riddle and the solution, do not form a symbiotic relationship; the riddle is not made to be solved, and the interpretation is not the perfect tool for solving the puzzle. On the contrary, from Adorno's perspective the interpreter is bound to fail. In other words, the interpretation is characterized by a fundamental insufficiency. The non-identity and the truth content of the artwork demands interpretation, theoretical reflection, critique'. (Johansson, 2013, pp. 155-156).

¹⁸ YouTuber and self-proclaimed video-essayist Evan Puschak says that a good definition of the essay is as following: 'essays should be short, interesting, and they should get to the truth'. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ald6Lc5TSk8>

¹⁹ At the same time, it is of course equally important to be critical towards the claim on art by Artistic Research.

In balancing the theoretical and artistic component, the tension between the free path of the artist and the rigid path of the scientist, need to be disclosed and guarded. A very helpful metaphor by Mika Hannula, Juha Suoranta and Tere Vadén in the 2005 book *Artistic Research - Theories, Methods and Practices* is: “let all flowers bloom” — as long as tending the garden’ (Hannula, 2005). This implies one does not simply let the nature of the artistic process take its course, but also be selective with the material.

3 Unmethodological Method

A critical and reflective position toward the topic of investigation is central to Adorno’s definition of the essay. Together with the aesthetic and theoretical content they are key characteristics of the textual essay. Defining the essay’s unmethodological method is the first step in applying its mode to Artistic Research.

As mentioned in the introduction of this article: in the text *The Essay as Form*, Adorno names the essay’s procedure ‘methodically unmethodically’ (Adorno, 1984). Contrary to Klaus and Stuckey-French’s claim in *Essayists on the Essay*, it is not just ‘antimethodological’ (Klaus and Stuckey-French, 2012) but rather a methodical avoidance of methods: an intentional way of consciously and constantly breaking from possible constraints of systematic scientific methods, as a method. The unmethodological method is not a scientific method but it is also not as free as ‘anything goes’: ‘(the essay) does not proceed blindly, automatically’ (Adorno, 1984, p.170). The phrase ‘methodically unmethodically’ encapsulates an inherent paradox, or as R. Lane Kauffman describes in his essay on the essay *A skewed path*: a ‘dialectical play of opposites’ (Lane Kaufmann, 1988). It entails the paradoxical balance of the artistic and scientific components within the essay form. Hartle and Lijster even claim that *Der Essay als Form* is probably as close as Adorno ever came to giving a description of his philosophy (Hartle and Lijster, 2015) and, one could argue, not a description but a demonstration of an unmethodological method as a philosophy.

The interpretation of method also depends of the definition of the word method. Nowadays it is referred to as a *rational procedure* typically applied to science. In ancient Greek ‘method, n.’ (OED, 2018) (μέθοδος) translates as ‘pursuit of knowledge’. *Method* historically comes from *meta-* ‘after’ (see *meta-*) + *hodos* ‘a traveling, way’ (see *cede*) (Harper, 2018). For the essay’s method, the perfect description might be *pursuit of knowledge*: pursuit implying the journey undertaken may or may not lead to knowledge. It is because of this searching that its structure is always in process and its form is always complete, because it recognizes its own incompleteness. Or as Adorno puts it: ‘the totality of non-totality’ (Adorno, 1984).

The paradox of the unmethodological method lies in the fact, although knowledge is not the end-goal, it is the driving force of endless attempts of its topic. In the end the essay is never truly finished.

The constant reinterpretation is the effort of the essay to critically reflect on the here and now and speculate on the here and now. This reflection and speculation creates the potential for paradigm shifts as Ericsson describes. If we take this speculative practice and look at Artistic Research, we see a similar usage. Arlander (and Wesseling) also describe artistic research as a speculative practice: 'We can think of artistic research as a speculative practice 'act as an activity engaged in imagining alternatives, as a form of speculation through practice' (Arlander, 2016). Michael Schwab's *The Future Knowledge in Artistic Research* (2014) demonstrates the speculative quality and potential of Artistic Research as well. This *search for future knowledge* is the driving force of essayists and artistic researchers.

Adorno starts his text with a quote from Goethe's Pandora: 'Bestimmt, Erleuchtetes zu sehen, nicht das Licht' (Adorno, 1958) ('Destined to see the illuminated, not the light' (Adorno, 1984)). This references the idea that we cannot see the source but we can see what is illuminated by the source. Not to be blinded by the light of the contemporary but to try and see which things reflect the light of the contemporary.²⁰ Adorno writes: 'the essay comes so close to the here and now of the object, up to the point where that object, instead of being simply an object, dissociates itself into those elements in which it has its life' (Adorno, 1984). Or, as Graham Good describes: 'to transcend the here and now' (Good, 1988). This describes the contemporary perspective of the artistic researcher and the essayist. This speculative and contemporary practice also connects with the essay which will be discussed in the next part of this article.

4 Essay as *Verb*

The *essay* points to a categorizable genre, the essay as method implies a way of doing. What if we did not focus on the essay as *noun* as its form of expression, but as *verb*, the *essayist essaying*. This differentiation is an important step in order to define what *essaying art* as unmethodological method is and could entail for artistic

²⁰ Reference to Giorgio Agamben's description of the contemporariness: 'The ones who calls themselves contemporary are only those who do not allow themselves to be blinded by the lights of the century, and manage to get a glimpse of the shadows in those lights' [...] 'to perceive, this darkness of the present, this light that strives to reach us but cannot—this is what it means to be a contemporary.' (Agamben, 2009).

research. Before the essay was a noun (as literary text) the essay was a verb. I will now look at this etymological background of the word essay.

The naming of texts as essays, or rather 'Essai' starts with Michel de Montaigne. Montaigne's collection of three books (containing 107 texts) were published between 1580 and 1588, with a posthumous edition in 1895. The French *essai*, as well as the English *essay*, come from the late Latin word *exagium*. In Montaigne's time *exagium* was known as 'a kind of weight, piece of gold, a noble, a crowne' (Holyoake, 1640), a standard weight type of a $\frac{1}{72}$ of a pound (Tombour, 2017). The word refers to the weighing of the coins to test their weight and value. But *exagium* is also used in a broader sense in: 'examination, trial, testing' (OED, 2018), and as 'a balance' (Lewis and Short, 1879). The word *exagium* descends from the Latin *exigere* (Lewis and Short, 1879). *Exigere* comes from the root word *exigo*, defined in modern translation as: 'to drive out, to thrust out, to take or to turn out', and in a second meaning: 'to demand, require, enforce, performance of duty' (Lewis and Short, 1879). In the first definition of *to drive out*, *drive* refers to driving out, as in: driving cattle, or to be driven, to flee, to chase or to hunt (OED, 2018).²¹ Translating the word in a historical context, for instance in a Latin to English dictionary from 1563, *exigo* is translated as: 'to expell, shut, or draw out, to expresse, to prove, examine, to require, to exact, take away by force, to finish, to cast forth' (Véron, 1575; Holyoake, 1640). *Exigo* is a combination of the word *ex-* (meaning: *out*) and *agere* (meaning *act*) (Harper, 2018). The root word of *agere* is *age* or *ago*, *ago* translated into: 'to do, to make, to go about, to labour, to accuse, to apply' (Holyoake, 1640). So, in its most basic meaning *exagium* is *to act out*.

The Encyclopedia of the Essay mentions Montaigne might have used the word *Essai* to refer to '*coup d'essai*' (trial run, dummy run or first try (Kellogg, 2018)) and describes the saying as: 'the apprentice artisan's work as distinct from the master's' (Chadbourne, 1997). A dictionary from 1697 describes it as: 'a trial of one's workmanship that's newly come out of his time' (Miege, 1679). What the encyclopedia of the Essay does not mention is the reference of the word combination *coup d'essai* to the sentence: 'Faire son coup d'essai, son chef d'oeuvre, pour passer Maître (to make a trial of his skill in order to be made free)' (Miege, 1679). This might also give insight in the intention of Montaigne's use of the word *essai*. Montaigne might have referred to the essay as a trial (or test): an attempt to free ones self from ruling consensus.

The first translation of Montaigne's 'Essais' was published in 1603 by Florio under the title 'Montaigne's Essays'. Since then, the book has been translated into English many times. To understand the transformation of the use of the *essai* from

²¹ Drive as a noun only entered the vocabulary in 1697.

verb to noun, we will take a look at its path in the English language. In 1603 the title of Montaigne's book was translated into the English *essay* meaning: to put to proof, to test or attempt (OED, 2018). In the English language, the word *essay* replaced the original *assay* near the end of the sixteenth century. According to the Oxford English Dictionary Online, the verb *assay* entered the English language around 1300, and was used as a noun around 1330. *Assay* was translated into: 'to put to the test, to put to the proof' (OED, 2018). The verb *essay* was first included in the English dictionaries in 1483, but the noun *essay* only entered the dictionary in 1597. From around 1400 until 1676 the verb *essay* referred to the 'essay of a deer' (Phillips, 1678) which was a hunting term used to describe a deer's brisket. The root word is again *assay*, in this definition relating to: 'to assault, attack, assail' (OED, 2018). So, *essay* and *assay* find their affiliation in the test of strength or to attack anything difficult. Coincidentally, the shift of *assay* as verb to *essay* as noun occurs in the same year in which the English philosopher and writer Francis Bacon (1561–1626) published the first edition of his *Essays* in 1597.

This action of *essaying* (the essay of verb) is the attempt to balance and to test the value of its topic; to examine, to drive it to its borders; to chase and to hunt it; to try to attack it from many different angles and with many different strategies; to try out with different angles, different tactics and strategies. The goal is to *attempt*: to break with the consensus of the topic, to speculate on its current value; to try to free oneself from dominant teachings. Connecting the verb *essay* (as a way of testing) with Adorno's unmethodological method (which focuses on form and content, on the aesthetic and the theoretical, on the critical and the self-reflective), we will now apply *essaying* to Artistic Research.

5 Essaying Art

As this research shows, there is an inherent connection between the essay and Artistic Research, and the potential of *essaying* as an approach to Artistic Research. An approach which can be as diverse in expression as the essay is in form. Just as difficult as it is to define text as essay it will be equally difficult to define Artistic Research. Instead of focusing on definitions, we could focus on the essayistic *modus*, or unmethodological method.

The relatively new field of Artistic Research could be a place where art and science come closer together, and where *essaying* could reach its full potential. The artistic researcher *essaying* chooses the topic of investigation freely and attempts to find different ways of viewing and probing the topic, and ignores the need for structured and linear investigation. The form of expression is artistic, it can entail multiple forms (for example: film, photo, and drawing) in any combination. Text too can be presented in different forms (for example: lyrics, subtitles, lists,

anecdotes, diary entries) or any combination. The fragmented and non-linear arrangement of the form (presented in a conceptual and aesthetic manner) leaves room for interpretation of the content. Both theory and practice are incorporated as equal partners in the investigation of the artistic researcher's topic: *essaying* allows for playful and impulsive elements, for the subjective and objective, for the experiential and the intellectual. The attitude of the artistic researcher *essaying* is relentless and focused. At every moment one must reflect on produced content, as well as being critical towards the produced content. The aim is to let the different modes interact with each other, not to make science out of art or art out of science. A process with the potential of a scientific contribution and the potential of an artwork, or both. The initial intent is not to justify, to conclude, or to proof, but to search and to express.

How can *essaying* in Artistic Research be used in practice? The aim of *essaying* art as an unmethodological method is to encourage artistic researchers to research their topics simultaneously both artistically and scientifically by approaching their topics *essayistically*. *Essaying* enables students and artistic researchers to develop individual definitions and forms of Artistic Research; it stimulates their usage and perspective on the artistic component and the theoretical component in their research (theoretical) and practice (artistic), and to let the modes oscillate. But to allow different forms of expression, different media, we need a different format. Perhaps in the form of a modern-day *Zuihitsu* in an online space²².

The essay is closely related to the classical Japanese literary genre *Zuihitsu*, which emerged during the Heian Period (AD 794-1185). One of the most famous *Zuihitsu*'s is the 'Pillow Book'²³ completed in 1002. Because both the content and the structure are very flexible, the genre has also been notoriously hard to define (DiNitto, 2004)²⁴. The word *zuihitsu* is made up of the kanji words for 'to follow' and 'brush'. The word comes from the sentence 'fude ni shitagau' ('following the brush' (Rudd, 2011)). It is the act of following a lead: whether the brush paints or writes, it is the path that leads and the author who follows. The genre aims to escape the narrative constraints. For example, in a *Zuihitsu* there are: 'series of loosely connected essays and anecdotes, as well as disconnected sentences,

²² Apart from this *online space for essaying*, the case-study Practice Tutorial, also uses a *performative space for essaying* at Café Chercher (<http://www.cafechercher.org/>).

²³ The Pillow Book was written by Sei Shōnagon in 990's and early 1000's in Heian Japan. The book also inspired Peter Greenaway for his 1996 film "The Pillow Book". In a lecture he explicitly mentions he is as much concerned with the structure of the medium film as with the content. Being originally educated as a painter, Greenaway says image becomes before language and cinema is first form and structure. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BluXxpF3OP4> (Accessed 11 Jun. 2016)

²⁴ DiNitto quotes renowned *Zuihitsu* theorist Linda Chance who calls it a "quintessential nongenre".

fragments, ideas, word pictures, poems, lists, and snatches of conversations' (DiNitto, 2004). In the Zuihitsu, the recorded thoughts of the author are central. Both the fragmented form and the presence of the author can be compared to the essay form. The difference being, apart from consisting of many different writing styles, the Zuihitsu also contains drawings and paintings. A modern-day Zuihitsu could incorporate sound, video, images, and web-links. But new forms of expression seek new places for expression (Schwab and Borgdorff, 2014), and an online environment could provide this place.

A platform which facilitates these new forms of expression is the workspace of the Research Catalogue²⁵, which also provides the working format for 'Journal of Artistic Research'. The Research Catalogue provides tools to create an online workspace. In this workspace, one can upload different types of media and place them freely in the exposition space. It is possible to share the workspace publicly, or with fellow Research Catalogue members. One can also self-publish the workspace or hand it in for peer-review. The exposition space creates freedom of thought for the essay and the freedom of incorporating media apart from text. It also allows for non-linear arrangement. To essay freely.

This article has demonstrated relevance for using *essaying* as an approach in the field of Artistic Research. The field of Artistic Research has been analyzed in relation to the essay form and vice versa. By looking back at the essay on etymology as a verb and the usage of the essay as unmethodological method, it has been disconnected from textual restrictions. Finally, by using the Zuihitsu in connection to *essaying* art in an online context has resulted in *essaying* as an unmethodological method for Artistic Research, as art and research *in potentia*.

Bibliography

Adorno, T. (1958). *Noten zur Literatur I; Der Essay als Form*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, pp.9-49.

Adorno, T. (1984). 'The Essay as Form'. Translated from German by B. Hullot-Kentor and F. Will, 1984. *New German Critique*, (32), pp.151-171.

²⁵ Research Catalogue, an International database for Artistic Research: <https://www.researchcatalogue.net>. 'The Research Catalogue (RC) is a searchable database for archiving artistic research. RC content is not peer reviewed, nor is it highly controlled for quality, being checked only for appropriateness. As a result, the RC is highly inclusive. The open source status of the RC is essential to its nature and serves its function as a connective and transitional layer between academic discourse and artistic practice, thereby constituting a discursive field for artistic research. The RC creates a link between (1) elaborated documentation of the work; and (2) expositions and comments that engage with the contribution of the work as research.' <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/portal/about> [Accessed 27 Oct. 2017].

- Agamben, G. (2009). 'What is the contemporary?' in Kishik, D. and Pedatella, S. (eds) *What is an Apparatus? and Other Essays*. Stanford University Press, pp.39-54.
- Arlander, A. (2016). *Artistic Research as speculative practice*. [online] Journal for Artistic Research. Available at: <http://www.jar-online.net/artistic-research-as-speculative-practice> [Accessed 21 Oct. 2017].
- Borgdorff, H. (2012). *Conflict of the Faculties, perspectives on Artistic Research and Academia*. Leiden: Leiden University Press.
- Borgdorff, H. and Sonderen P. (eds) (2012). *Denken in kunst, theorie en reflectie in het kunstonderwijs*. Leiden: Leiden University Press.
- Burgard, P. (1992). Adorno, Goethe, and the Politics of the Essay. *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 66(1), pp.183-187.
- Butrym, A. (ed.) (1989). *Essays on the essay*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, pp.221-240.
- Chadbourne, R. (1997). 'Montaigne, Michel de' in Chevalier, T. (ed.) *Encyclopedia of the Essay*. Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, pp.1201-1206.
- Chevalier, T. (1997). *Encyclopedia of the Essay*. Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers.
- Cummins, E. (2013). City Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action: Perspectives and Contingencies. *Taylor and Francis Online*, 17(3), pp.414-418.
- D'Agata, J. (2009). *The Lost Origins of the Essay*. Minneapolis: Graywolf Press.
- DiNitto, R. (2004). Return of the "Zuihitsu": Print Culture, Modern Life, and Heterogeneous Narrative in Prewar Japan. *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 64(2), pp.251-290.
- Elkins, J. (2013). 'Six Cultures of the PhD' in Wilson, M. and Van Ruiten, S. (eds) *SHARE Handbook for Artistic Research Education*, pp.10-15.
- Erickson, L. (2004). *Metafact: Essayistic Science in Eighteenth-Century France*. Chapel Hill: Chapel Hill Press, pp.40,46.
- Fournier, A. (2016). *Rudimentariness: a concept for artistic research*. [online] Journal for Artistic Research. Available at: <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/261526/262795/0/0> [Accessed 21 Oct. 2017].
- Goethe, J. (2010). The Experiment as Mediator of Object and Subject. Translated from German by C. Holdrege, *In Context*, (4), pp.19-23.
- Good, G. (1988). *The Observing Self, Rediscovering the Essay*. London: Routledge, p.25.
- Hannula, M., Suoranta, J., Vadén, T. (2005). *Artistic Research – Theories, Methods and Practices*. Translated from Finnish by G. Griffiths and K. Kiilhi. Helsinki: Academy of Fine Arts, p.73.

Harper, D. (2018). [online] Etymonline.com. Available at:
<http://etymonline.com/> [Accessed 2 May 2018].

Hartle, J. and Lijster, T. (2015). *De Kunst van Kritiek. Adorno in Context*. Amsterdam: Octavo Publicaties, pp7-13.

Hesse, D. (1997). 'The British Essay', in Chevalier, T. (ed) *Encyclopedia of the Essay*. Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, pp.220-238.

Holyoake, F. (1640). *Riders Dictionarie*. 5th edn. London: Felix Kingston.

Horgan, H. (2011). *Thinking as Gesture from Adorno's Essay as Form*. self-published, p.6.

Johansson, A. (2013). The necessity over-interpretation: Adorno, the essay, and the gesture of aesthetic experience. *The Central European Journal of Aesthetics*, (2), pp.149-168.

Kaila, J., Slager, H., and Balkema, A. (2012). *Doing research*. Helsinki: The Finnish Academy of Fine Arts.

Kellogg, M. (2018). *essai - traduction - Dictionnaire Français-Anglais*. [online] Wordreference.com. Available at: <http://www.wordreference.com/fren/essai> [Accessed 2 May 2018].

Klaus, C. and Stuckey-French, N. (eds) (2012). *Essayists on the essay*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, p.xx.

Lane Kauffmann, R. (1988). The Skewed Path: Essaying as Un-Methodical Method. *Diogenes*, 36(143), pp.66-92.

Lewis, C. and Short, C. (eds) (1879). *A Latin Dictionary*. [online] Database of Latin Dictionaries. Available at: <http://www.brepolis.net> [Accessed 2 May 2018].

Lukács, G. (2010). *Soul & form*. New York: Columbia University Press, p.17.

Mateus-Berr, R. (2013). 'Habits within Arts- and Design-Based Research', in Wilson, M. and Van Ruiten, S. (eds) *SHARE Handbook for Artistic Research Education*, pp.152-161.

Mäki, T. (2014). *Art and Research Colliding*. [online] Journal for Artistic Research. Available at: <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/49919/49920/0/0> [Accessed 21 Oct. 2017].

Miege, G. (1679). *A new dictionary French and English, with another English and French*. London: Thomas Basset.

Montaigne, M. (1603). *The Essays of Montaigne*. Translated from French by J. Florio.

Nauha, T. (2013). *Schizoanalysis as a Method in Artistic Research*. [online] Journal for Artistic Research. Available at: <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/26327/29049/0/0> [Accessed 21 Oct. 2017].

Obaldia, C. (1996). *The Essayistic Spirit*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 5, 115-118.

Oxford English Dictionary Online (OED) (2018). [online] Available at: <https://www.oed.com> [Accessed 2 May 2018].

Phillips, E. (1678). *A new world of words, or a General Dictionary*. 4th edn. London: Robert Harford.

Pourciau, S. (2007). Ambiguity Intervenes: The strategy of Equivocation in Adorno's Ambiguity Interveneses. *MLN*, 122(3), pp.623-646.

Rajchman, J. (2013). 'London SHARE Conference: A Critical Response', in Wilson, M. and Van Ruiten, S. (eds) *SHARE Handbook for Artistic Research Education*, pp.125-132.

Rudd, A. (2011). Following Where the Brush Leads: The Potential of the Zuihitsu in American Postmodernist Literature. *Plaza: Dialogues in Language and Literature*, (1.1), pp.42-43.

Schwab, M. (2013). *Experimental Systems*. Leuven: Orpheus Institute Series.

Schwab, M. and Borgdorff, H. (2014). *The Exposition of Artistic Research: Publishing in Academia*. Leiden: Leiden University Press.

Snyder, J. (1991). *Prospects of power*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky.

Spellmeyer, K. (1989). A Common Ground: The Essay in the Academy. *College English*, 51(3), p.264.

Steyerl, H. (2011). 'The Essay as Conformism? Some Notes on Global Image Economics', in Kramer, S. and Tode, T. (eds) *Der Essayfilm. Ästhetik und Aktualität*, (20), pp.101-110.

Tombeur, P. (2017). *Database of Latin Dictionaries (DLD)*. [online] Available at: <http://www.brepolis.net> [Accessed 2 May 2018].

Véron, J. (1575). *A dictionary in Latine and English*. 2nd edn. London: John Harison.

Wampole, C. (2013). The Essayification of Everything. [Blog] *The Stone*. Available at: <https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/05/26/the-essayification-of-everything/> [Accessed 2 May 2018].

Wilson, M. and Van Ruiten, S. (eds) (2013). *SHARE Handbook for Artistic Research Education*. [ebook] Available at: <http://www.sharenetwork.eu/resources/share-handbook> [Accessed 2 May 2018], pp. III, 7-8, 31.

ART FIRST, RESEARCH AFTER¹

María-Isabel Moreno-Montoro, María Martínez-Morales and Martha-Patricia Espíritu-Zavalza

Abstract

This work addresses the confusion created in determining what type of research is undertaken, particularly in the case of Artistic Research and Arts Based Research. The very fact that artistic practice is present at some stage of research development is considered to be a determining aspect of the research's artistic nature. From our point of view, what we clearly declare to be Artistic Research has very clear artistic creation process implications in the research process. This characterization does not occur on other occasions in which artistic practice is present at any time but fulfils other functions that are not determining in the creation process or in the final artistic goals of research results.

It also addresses the question of whether it is important to specify so specifically the type of research carried out. Sometimes, a great deal of effort is spent on naming the research, relegating what is really the essence of the process to second place. Our goal is to work on artistic production considering it intrinsically researchable, so that the organization of research will be easily recognizable and organized when its treatment is necessary in a context and academic situation. To illustrate this proposal, we present an example of some research directed by us, the Masters thesis by Clara Monteiro Brito. This example shows the role played by artistic production and how the initial situation becomes a problem for the creative process which was what constituted Clara's motivation. For us, this demonstrates that it is more important to do the artistic practice properly without losing its essence before the research structure, research depends on the artistic production.

Research fits the suit of Art

The indisputable complexity of the artistic creation process leads the result of artistic creation to also be the outcome of research. We all agree on that. To achieve a piece of artwork, we have followed a protocol in which we have done everything that is done in research. We have a problem or situation for which we

¹ Our acknowledgment to Clara Monteiro Brito for allowing us to use her master thesis as an example of the research work that our team develops.

need to find a solution. We have studied the topic. We have looked into what others have said about the subject, both artistically and critically speaking. We have also practiced by trial and error testing. Finally, we have achieved a result, which may or may not satisfy us. What is the problem? Why do we go to great lengths to justify every step we take to produce the artwork? Let's just do it! We can call it art, and that's it. If it is art, it is research. First it is art and, therefore, that is to say later, it is research.

Throughout the history of artists and their practices, we have found how they tell us about the way they look at their work. In the case of plastic arts, exhibition catalogues became critical studies which revealed the process. This entails relating the problems the artwork posed to both authors and receivers, it also entails talking about the artistic production's references and, on many occasions, information about the process employed in any of its aspects. That is to say, the same as we find in a thesis.

In his text "La investigación basada en las artes. Propuestas para repensar la investigación en educación" ("Art Based Research. Proposals to rethink research in education"), Fernando Hernández-Hernández states that from the start of his relationship

...with the field of Visual Arts, I have tried to explore alternatives to what is known as 'scientific investigation', in such a way that rigour and demand are not excluded from ways of investigating which try to capture the processes linked to different types of experience.²
(Hernández-Hernández, 2008: 86)

If it is true that by putting it that way, it is more inclusive, since not only artistic ways can be considered in this demand for "other ways" to talk about research, it is also true that it dodges a decisive situation in the artistic task, giving the feeling that this artistic task is subsidiary to any other objective in education or other disciplines. We wouldn't, therefore, be talking about art before research. For us, this is a crucial text, in the sense that it brings together many of the stumbling blocks which, like a thick curtain, don't allow the personification of artistic production and its characterisation of research to be seen.

² The original in Spanish ...con el campo de las Artes Visuales he tratado de explorar alternativas a lo que se considera como 'investigación científica', de manera que el rigor y la exigencia no queden excluidos de formas de indagación que traten de captar los procesos vinculados a diferentes formas de experiencia.

On the one hand is the collection of considerations by other authors which Hernández calls upon for his argument, Barone, Save and Nuutinen, Mason, Mullenn or Levine among others, and on the other hand is his account of his own experiences in these processes. The sequence of events revolve around a concept of research in which arts are expected to take their place. This article by Hernández in 2008, has coherent continuity in the texts which are still being produced in 2018, ten years later, in different forums which deal with Artistic Research or Art Based Research. We want to point out that, despite the fact that ten years have gone by in which a considerable amount of literature has been produced on the subject and diverse congresses, seminars, conferences and monographs have been held, we are still trying to dress research as art. It must be made clear that it is a position we share, and we will develop this idea in the third section of this text, Art fits the suit of Research, in which we clearly explain how we confront the concept of Art Based Research, which for us is clearly a process in which artistic practice and production play a subsidiary role. We therefore clearly differentiate it from what we consider to be Artistic Research, in which we believe that Art is dressed as research. If, as we point out in the third section of this text, research looks good dressed as art, art looks even better dressed as research (Allen, 1995; Borgdorf, 2012; Haseman, 2007; Nelson, 2013; Valladares-González, 2015; Moreno-Montoro et al, 2016; Gómez Martínez, 2014; Espíritu Zavalza, 2017; Vicente, 2006; Villegas Vergara, 2018).

Our conviction about this resides in the fact that we consider that the artistic creation process is the pattern for all research. We have acknowledged that the portfolio is a method in education that has been imported from the world of artists and designers, and now we should acknowledge that research, in general, has been imported from the world of creation. By simply going through some of the articles and essays published in academic journals of the field, we can find examples of artistic practices that are proof of how research is configured. The problems indicated by a large majority of authors regarding transparency in the demonstration of the research process is, for us, more proof that they have not understood that the idea is not to dress research with art, but that research is the suit to dress art in. An artistic process can be one hundred percent eloquent in its investigative organization, and if the percentage should begin to fall we simply increase the explanations in the report or catalogue, which accompanies it. That's all. (Monteiro Brito, 2018; Espíritu Zavalza, 2017; Moreno-Montoro et al, 2016; Villegas Vergara, 2018).

Justification generates confusion

However, genuine fear of presenting artwork and its production process, creates a succession of curtains which cushion the outcome of the artistic process, and

therefore what we are finally presented with is not the artistic result but a simulation. Thus, what we have is a research imposture. Another simulation.

A paraphernalia of explanations on the investigative nature of the artistic product being presented, begins to gain importance in the process in question, to the point where the process itself becomes something subsidiary. Then we find that the process, like a study with a lot of theory and history, is converted into the important part, in which the outcome ends up being no more than an illustrative example.

In this way, we think of the process as research given the possibilities it offers us to create new discourses, connections and intuitions which respond to the way in which it has been developed. In this sense, artistic practice projects a way of working that favours the appearance of new procedures during the process, which is coherent with the sense of the research, allowing flexibility in the proposal and its development. The way of working isn't intended to fit into a pre-established framework, but to be part of the investigation willing to be reconsidered at any time in order to generate new procedures. Hence, research attempts to organize part of this knowledge, expressed in the creative process and in the artistic product itself. Along these lines we find the Spinoza Grid Project which refers to the term Artistic Research to describe the artistic process itself and which also includes artistic production as a phase of research which generates knowledge. With the idea of creating new possibilities through the process, where action does not stop or break up to extract the findings inside, but can be followed to the end to be reinterpreted.

Art fits the suit of Research

This is the case in which artistic practices and their productions enter into a research structure to form part of one of its phases playing part in the process. This is what is commonly called Art Based Research, given that on the whole the role they play is that of methods to obtain information. So, the tools and materials characteristic of creative processes also come into play by forming part of the artistic method chosen as a strategy to gather data.

Without prejudice to what has been said in previous sections, we can therefore use artistic processes as methods in other research. But this would not be artistic practice or artistic research.

We don't embark on a task in order to get an artistic production. The outcome will be a report without artistic product characteristics. But art is so good for

research, whatever it may be, that sometimes it confuses us. We think this happens because in other fields of research there is also considerable fear of acknowledging the usefulness of art as a method. It is usually justified as a complement that could have been substituted by another method.

What we have before us is a conceptual movement which moves away from the outlines of conventional quantitative and qualitative research paradigms, widely accepted by academic institutions and also very characterized, which leads to confusion regarding terms and designs. Nevertheless, this confusion does not correspond to the imprecisions of the definition of this type of activity. Torres and Agra point out that:

Artistic Research or Art Based Research is an emerging group of very diverse methods, which aim to soften the borders between science and art. These methods are based on the artistic process as a primary source of investigation, and uses forms of art as a way of obtaining data, analysing behaviour or representing research in sciences (...) making use of artistic processes and different procedures in research processes as a subject to be investigated in order to generate, interpret or represent research, ³ (Torres & Agra, 2018:20)

In this sense, this movement responds to two different objectives. The first one places art as an essential resource to obtain research data, while the second objective integrates it in a secondary role within the research framework, determined by the scientific disciplines which support the methodological procedure. In this context, the use of art can respond to very different and varied intentions, ranging from the embellishment of the research product to the establishment of authentic dialogue between the science sponsoring the research process and the art which accompanies it, in the best of cases.

In the first case, the result will be a report. Although it is not an artistic product in itself, the dialogue which is internally built between art's resources in the shape of research and the research design made within the confines of the science does constitute a product which we could well consider to be Art Based Research because it is configured by dialogue.

³ The original in Spanish "La investigación artística o basada en las artes es un conjunto emergente de métodos muy diversos con la ambición de diluir las líneas de ciencia y arte. Estos métodos se basan en el proceso artístico como fuente primaria de indagación, y utilizan formas de arte como camino para obtener datos, análisis de conducta o representar investigación en ciencias. (...) hace uso de procesos artísticos y de las diferentes formas de los procesos de investigación, como un tópico sobre el que indagar, para generar, interpretar o representar la investigación".

Alternatively, the dialogue between the two parts of the investigation could be considered placing art in a secondary role, a simple tool to reinforce the primary discourse, thereby continuing with the convention of priority of linguistic discourse in the field of scientific transmission. In this case, the inclusion of tools characteristic of art is no more than random, non-essential use which can be foregone without affecting the report. In this case, the results of the process constitute no more than a conventional report nourished by resources originating in the arts. At this point we must insist that the opportunities which art offers in an Art Based Research process are placed in a statute of the first order which can be assigned to any of the stages of the research process, precisely because of the dialogue which arises through the process, and is essential to construct other ways of doing research.

Our experience with Clara

What we can see in the photographs was the public event in which Clara Monteiro Brito defended her Masters thesis; she is a dancer, a contemporary dancer from Brazil and an actor. But she is really a pretty versatile creator who works with the photographic camera, and projects her work from a very contemporary intermedia perspective, using the different fields she dominates including music which, as a dancer, was closely linked to her, although not as a composer. As a woman who comes from a large city such as Bahía, Clara, who has developed in her work the personal gender perspective, found a huge contrast in Jaén, a small city in Southern Europe tightly bound to the world of olive growing. (Monteiro Brito, 2018)

She rapidly felt that women here, who belong to the agricultural social class, have a life style that contrasts with the place she is from, a macro metropolis. Her interest in the subject leads her to opt for research which will provide her with her own answers as to how women feel. A creative performative process from the beginning to delve into the contents her creative process needs in order to be produced.

In her research presentation she developed an integrated discourse along various lines. It had and an arrangement of objects, among other things, soil spread over the floor which had been taken from different olive groves to give different colours. Some mini viewers with a slide inside show different moments of the process.

The four images illustrate part of the presentation of the master thesis of Clara M.B.⁴



Image 1 and 2: Two video projections in the public event in which Clara Monteiro Brito defended her Masters thesis



Image 3: Participants picking mini viewers up and look at them

These mini viewers were placed around on the soil as if they were olives so that the participants could pick them up and look at them using a gesture similar to that which is used when the olives are picked up by hand, which is the main job of women in the field at collection time.

When all this is finished, what continues is a brief dissertation by Clara in which she explains to the public certain aspects of her process which she believes she needs to share with them to fully achieve what she set out to do.

⁴ All images come from the authors.



Image 4: Brief dissertation by Clara in which she is explaining to the public.

Given that her artistic research included a performative process of creation in which she was investigating at the same time both the topic and her own role and the way to present it in public, the presentation took place in a public exhibition hall and was open for a week, it was also undertaken at a time of day compatible with this type of act and the commission's timetable. The Masters thesis report worked as a kind of catalogue and she also made a poster to announce it.

To conclude

In our opinion, an artistic production which is presented as the solution to the situation which originated the whole process, unravels the whole tangle of explanations when it relates how it was achieved in great detail. Art fits so well in research that when the former is related, the latter is self-explanatory.

Our current position is to start Artistic Research from the proposal we are in the process of creating. Given a problem or a situation we make problematic, to be resolved from the role played by the artist, everything we do falls within the organization of the creative artistic process. In Clara's case, the issue revolves around how to understand the lives of women for a woman who comes from a large city like Bahía, she herself, who has developed in her work the personal gender perspective, and found a huge contrast in Jaén, a small city in Southern Europe tightly bound to the world of olive growing.

Plurality of format in artistic research corresponds, therefore, to the same plurality artistic productions are subject to. What is for certain is that it is guaranteed that the outcome will be production or artistic process.

As Artistic Research, we must watch to see that the outcome can be understood in its investigative dimension, and we will have to provide it with the necessary tools to explain the points that are not clear.

Affirming that art is first and research comes after is not pronounced in the successive sense in which it should be written, but in the conviction that being art it is, without a shadow of a doubt, research. The decision to present artistic products as research is, after all, a question of the way we make it public.

Taking into account what has previously been said, whatever role production or artistic process plays in research which is not the result, it will be so because it is undertaking a different type of research that is not artistic. Identifying the role that production plays is important to know what is being done. It is also important to question and justify it. Once that has been decided, providing explanations to give rigour to the research is not necessary. It is at this point that we say that explanations are unnecessary and a waste effort to justify ourselves when we try to 'be rigorous'. Rigour forms part of the process itself and explanations are only given to provide clarity when the artistic result is not eloquent.

Bibliography

- Allen, P. (1995). *Art is a way of knowing*. Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications.
- Borgdorff, H. (2012). *The conflict of the faculties. Perspectives on artistic research and academia*. Amsterdam: Leiden University Press.
- Espíritu Zavalza, M. P. (2017). "Ficciones: obra en proceso. Un proyecto de investigación-creación". *Tercio Creciente*, 11, págs. 107-116. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.17561/rtc.n11.7>
- Gómez Martínez, A. (2014). "Estampar la Mugre. La materia aludida en los procesos de estampación". *Tercio Creciente* nº 5, págs. 77 - 82, <http://www.terciocreciente.com>
- Haseman, B. (2007). "Rupture and recognition: Identifying the performative research paradigm", in Barrett, B. & Bolt, B. (eds.) (2007). *Practice as research. Approaches to creative arts enquire*. U.K.: Tauris
- Hernández-Hernández, F. (2008) "La investigación basada en las artes. Propuestas para repensar la investigación en educación". *Educatio Siglo XXI*, n. 26.
- Monteiro Brito, Clara. (2018). "El cultivo del cuerpo femenino: la investigación de una escena videoinstalativa en la ciudad de Jaén". *Tercio Creciente*, 13, págs. 39-56. <https://dx.doi.org/10.17561/rtc.n13.4>
- Moreno-Montoro, M.I., Valladares-González, M. G. & Martínez-Morales, M. (2016). "La investigación para el conocimiento artístico. ¿Una cuestión

- gnoseológica o metodológica”, en Moreno & López-Peláez (coords.) (2016). *Reflexiones sobre investigación artística e investigación educativa basada en las artes*. España: Síntesis
- Nelson, R. (2013). *Practice as research in the arts*. UK: Palgrave McMillan
- Torres, T. & Agra, M.J. (2016) “Prólogo. Como pretexto para pensar en voz alta.” *Reflexiones sobre investigación artística e investigación basada en las artes*. Madrid: Síntesis
- Valladares González, M. G. (2015). “Diálogo con mi cuerpo danzante: un ejercicio de reflexividad”. *Tercio Creciente*, 7, págs. 25-28, <http://revistaselectronicas.ujaen.es/index.php/RTC/article/view/3102/2474>
- Vicente, S. (2006). “Arte y parte. La controvertida cuestión de la investigación artística”, en Gotthelf, R. (dir.) (2006). *La investigación desde sus protagonistas. Senderos y estrategias*. Argentina: EDIUNC
- Villegas Vergara, Ignacio. (2018). “Práctica artística como investigación: su instalación y desarrollo en el sistema académico chileno”. *Tercio Creciente*, 13, págs. 19-30. <https://dx.doi.org/10.17561/rtc.n13.2>

SYMBIOSIS: ORGANISATION AND MUTUAL EXPLOITATION IN INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION

Manoli Moriaty

Abstract

Interdisciplinary collaboration in performance practice is an approach that has previously resulted in fruitful outcomes, and is currently modish by funding bodies and academic institutions as exhortations for bridging distinct subjects and practitioners. Nevertheless, the ambiguity of the terms ‘interdisciplinary’ and ‘collaboration’ often leads to misrepresentation, particularly when lacking context on the specific functions, expectations, and models of organisations adopted towards particular group projects. Accordingly, while practitioners and researchers respond to these prompts by forming alliances which deliver innovative outcomes and contributions to knowledge, they provide little reflection on the collaborative process and the challenges it is beset with in regards to authorship, hierarchy in creative control, and division of labour. In an attempt to address the problems arising from these issues, often experienced within my practice, I have developed a framework for interdisciplinary collaboration informed by the ways organisms of different species form beneficial relationships. Falling under the rubric of symbiosis, the biological sense of the term describes close and persistent interspecies associations aiming to extract benefit for at least one of the interacting organisms. With the ubiquitous biological phenomenon illustrating a fundamental mode of cooperation between individuals of distinct properties, my framework interprets the core typology of symbiotic relationships – mutualism, commensalism, parasitism – as prompts for a set of actions, precepts, and strategies that can be fluidly employed during each stage of the collaborative process according to the specific needs of each project and collaborative environment. With the findings emerging from my Practice Research, I present autoethnographic accounts of my sonic-arts practice and collaborations with art practitioners utilising physical movement, as well as case studies of seminal collaborative practices fusing sound and movement through interactive technologies. Examining the language commonly employed in describing collaborative processes through the lens of symbiotic relationships, I posit an approach that deposes the sentimental connotation of harmony and altruism that are attributed to symbiosis by lexicographers. Acknowledging the antagonistic nature of biological interactions, I celebrate diversity and divergent views in the collaborative environment, embrace conflict as a creative tool, and propose a model of mutual exploitation between practitioners of distinct disciplines, which, as demonstrated by biological associations, bares beneficial enduring results for all involved individuals.

Introduction

This research aims to interrogate the interconnected nature of creative practice.¹ I use the term ‘creative’, rather than ‘artistic’, as means of inclusivity for practices which while not recognised as part of the artistic field, remain crucial in the facilitation of artistic practice. Creativity is an intrinsic aspect of art, but not all creative thinking results in art, quite like not all art is creative. Musicians such as Eliane Radigue, Brian Eno, and Kraftwerk are celebrated as creative visionaries expressing through synthesisers. However, their practices were facilitated to a large extent by creative engineers such as Robert Moog, who pioneered technologies later exploited by such artists. This is not to suggest differing levels of importance between engineers and artists, but rather an example of the interconnected nature of those practices; without the creation of the synthesiser as a self-contained instrument, rather than earlier forms of disconnected circuits, artists would not have the possibilities presented by such technologies. Similarly, were it not for a demand by artists for an integrated instrument translating voltage variation into audible signals, there would have been little motivation for engineers to pursue such endeavour. Rather than wanting to engage in an interrogation of causality between the creative practices of the engineering of and composing for synthesisers, I present these practices as examples of interdependence. This notion is what motivated me to research creative practice through the lenses of biological interactions in the natural world, which in its whole makes up a deeply interconnected system of biotic and abiotic functions.

Practice background

The turn of the millennium found me immersed in Rave culture’s swansong, when my practice concerned performing various subgenres of electronic dance music (EDM) in a range of milieus, from mainstream nightclubs to Temporary Autonomous Zones. As a performer, my expressive medium was sound recorded on vinyl records, which I manipulated through interfaces made of tangible controls – sliders, potentiometers, switches; a practice derived from the origins of dub music which created a bridge between studio production and stage performance. Through a combination of force majeure due to chronic tinnitus and the good fortune of undertaking postgraduate studies under the supervision of skilled composers, my practice refocused on the area of sonic-arts and electroacoustic composition. Within the vast field of sonic-arts, I gravitated towards Live Electronics – a practice involving live sound performance via manipulation of

¹ This research was supported by the University of Salford, Pathway to Excellence Studentship. I thank my supervisors Dr. Joanne Scott and Prof. Stephen Davismoon who provided insight and expertise that greatly assisted the research. I further extend my gratitude to all practitioners I collaborated with, and particularly Barry Carter and Adam Hart, whose technical and technological contributions were invaluable in the completion of my work.

electronic instruments – largely due to the shared interface of my past practice, involving tangible controls, albeit now transmitting digital data rather than voltage variations. Through being embedded in these practices, I became familiar with gesture recognition technologies (GRT) and the ways they were being implemented in interactive performances involving sound and movement. Such approaches in performance practice can be traced as early as the 1965 performance *Variations V* by John Cage and Merce Cunningham. The work involved two systems developed by engineers Robert Moog and Billy Klüver which reacted to dancers' movements by controlling the transport controls of tape players (Miller 2001: 552). Nowadays, advances in digital technologies offer practitioners a wealth of approaches in utilising GRT within performance practices, be that commercially available devices, e.g. Source Audio Hot Hands, Sonic Geometry OTO, Infusion Systems I-CubeX, and Perception Neuron, appropriated gaming accessories such as the Nintendo Wii Remote and Microsoft Kinect, as well as bespoke devices built on microcomputing platforms such as Arduino and Raspberry Pi.

One of the results from the emergence of these technologies is the obscured boundaries between the practices of engineers and artists, often embodied within single practitioners nowadays. Along with the adoption of such technologies in performing arts, the ethical implications of digital technology communities have had a profound effect on the way collaboration is handled in performing arts. In the aforementioned example of *Variations V*, Cage and Cunningham are presented as the authors, and one has to dig deep into ethnographic accounts to appreciate the two engineers' invaluable contributions towards the work. Contrastingly, contemporary collectives, such as shinkansen led by Ghislaine Boddington, adopted a model of shared ownership between collaborators, and assigned authorship to all involved practitioners:

shinkansen's view is that processes of making work in the performing arts are, and arguably always has been, collaborative, and it is only the culture of the single voice and the cult of the star performer and/or creator, which have conspired to conceal this simple fact... emergent, digitally influenced interactions did not allow the ideology of the single author to be maintained and challenged the doctrine by putting forward notions of collaborative endeavour and shared ownership. (Boddington & Bannerman 2004: 76)

Wanting to utilise both these technologies and ethical implications within my practice, I focused on working with practitioners expressing through physical movement. Several motivations fuelled this approach; in line with my previous practice, I could maintain the position of controlling equipment strewn atop a table,

which offers my introverted personality a comforting safety barrier from the audience, thus allowing me to concentrate on the performance. At the same time, and perhaps more importantly, collaborating with practitioners of different disciplines presented a way of breaking the self-referential loop of working within a single discipline, described by Experience Bryon as ‘the self-affirming incestuous cycle of disciplinary knowledge’ (Bryon 2017: 23), and a way of exchanging knowledge from disciplinary fields that were new to me, thus expanding the potential of my expressive medium, sound, through what Basarab Nicolescu refers to as ‘disciplinary enrichment’ (Nicolescu, 1998). With these aspects making up the ‘intrinsic motivations’ of collaboration, that is the inner processes of collective work, it would be disingenuous to not acknowledge the ‘extrinsic’ motivations of interdisciplinary collaboration (Moran & John-Steiner 2004: 17-19). The outputs of my solo sonic-arts practice were mostly presented within the circles of acousmatic concerts and noise music events. Through including the medium of physical movement, outcomes from such joint practice could relate to environments such as dance, performance art, and musical theatre, which meant further possibilities for presentations. And, of course, the same applied for my collaborators, who could perform in the new to them aforementioned contexts.

Developing the collaborative practice initially with two artists practicing live drawing, Naomi Kendrick and Maria Kasapidou, the earliest name we adopted for our performance was *Symbiosis*, merely as a name which we found to be both interesting-sounding, as well as alluding to the combination of two disciplines and individuals. Combined with the initiation of my Practice Research into interdisciplinary collaboration, further study into the biological phenomenon of symbiosis presented strong links between the ways practitioners of different disciplines form collaborations and those observed within interspecies relationships in nature. With this in mind, the attention of my Practice Research shifted to examining interdisciplinary collaborations through the lenses of biological interactions, with a particular focus on developing a framework for interdisciplinary collaboration which is informed by the different manners in which organisms of different species engage in beneficial relationships.

Having described the framework in detail within a previous paper (Moriarty 2017), here I concentrate on specific aspects of symbiotic relationships, namely conflict, tension, and reciprocity within mutually beneficial interactions, and the ways these can be reflected within interdisciplinary collaboration. The aim is to illustrate how the diverse ways that symbiotic relationships manifest in nature are not only loosely reflected in creative practice, but also relate to certain aspects of social interaction evident within collaboration. In order to present my arguments, I first provide an

overview of symbiotic relationships, and a summary of my collaborative framework.

Biological phenomenon

Symbiosis, in its broadest definition, is described as those relationships which are interspecific, i.e. between different species, intimate in their proximity, and persistently enduring over time (Martin & Schwab, 2012, p. 36). With the interacting organisms identified as host and symbiont, relationships are further categorised according to the resulting health effect on the host, or its fitness outcome. Accordingly, symbioses where both organisms derive benefit are called mutualistic, those in which the symbiont derives benefit without significant effects on the host are termed commensalistic, and parasitic for ones where the symbiont derives benefit on the expense of harm for the host (Leung & Poulin, 2008, p. 107). A summary is presented in table 01.

Type of relationship	Fitness outcome	
	Symbiont	Host
Mutualistic	Positive	Positive
Commensalistic	Positive	Neutral
Parasitic	Positive	Negative

Table 01 – core typology of symbiotic relationships

Despite these seemingly straightforward definitions, a fundamental aspect of symbiotic relationships is their dynamic nature, and the observed ‘frequent transitions from one type to another’ due to either ‘environmental factors or internal influences’ (Paracer & Ahmadjian, 2000, p. 7). In other words, rather than the relationship types being ‘badges of fixed identity’, symbioses are instead context-dependant to the ‘given time and place’ the engaged organisms find themselves (Yong 2017: 80).

One of the most important developments in the study of symbiotic relationships concerns the redefinition of symbiosis as ‘exclusive mutualisms’ (Douglas 2010: 5), which initially seems contradictory to the fitness-outcome typology. However, considering the dynamic nature of symbiosis, recent studies observe a trend towards mutualism (Frederickson 2017: 727), which takes place through evolutionary mechanisms; if a host’s fitness is threatened, it will adapt traits which will either defend against the parasitic symbiont, or will allow the host to also derive benefit from the relationship. Similar adaptations take place from the symbiont’s perspective; being vested in prolonging the relationship, it will have to adjust the exploitation of its host to such level as to reciprocate a benefit which is at least as significant as what it receives. Moreover, further studies on the evolutionary trend

argue that all symbiotic relationships that are observed today can be traced back to parasitic beginnings (Paracer & Ahmadjian 2000: 7). What emerges from these findings is that rather than for organisms seeking to engage in symbiosis with the *ideal* partner, one that will provide more than what they receive, partners instead acknowledge the antagonistic nature of the biological world, learn how to manage relationships, and thus find an equilibrium of what researchers refer to as peaceful or reciprocal exploitation:

Why prolong harmful relationships? If a parasite is too good at causing harm to its host, then the host will die, along with the parasite. There is more benefit in a prolonged *peaceful exploitation* [emphasis added]. (Goodhead 2017: personal interview)

A well-functioning partnership could easily be seen as a case of *reciprocal exploitation* [emphasis added]. 'Both partners may benefit but there's this inherent tension. Symbiosis is conflict – conflict that can never be totally resolved' (Kriers, in Yong 2017: 85)

As a final note on the biological phenomenon, and as means of introducing its pertinence with collaborative practice, I posit the central arguments of two leading figures in their respective fields, evolutionary biologist Angela Douglas and scholar in creativity and education Vera John-Steiner:

Symbiotic interactions are those relationships between organisms that permit some species to overcome their physiological limitations by exploiting the capacities of others (Douglas 1994: i)

Collaboration offers partners an opportunity to transcend their individuality and to overcome the limitations of habit, and of biological and temporal constraints (John-Steiner 2000: 57)

From the above statements I understand that relationships between diverse individuals facilitates the advancement of both parties towards a common goal, be that chances of survival through increased fitness, or the development of creative outcomes through joint processes.

Collaborative framework

Absorbing knowledge from the field of biology led me to develop a framework for collaboration, aiming to provide a set of precepts and strategies that can facilitate two practitioners of distinct disciplines to collaborate towards the development of a creative outcome, be that live performance or fixed-media work. In using symbiosis

as conceptual basis, I firstly interpret the core traits of symbiotic relationships, with the interacting organisms referring to the individual practitioners, and interspecificity to the distinct disciplines they are practicing. The trait of intimacy relates to the direct engagement of the practitioners within the particular project, as opposed to second-hand knowledge extracted through literary research, and persistence refers to the constant engagement throughout all stages of the collaborative process, contrasting with consultation on specific areas of a project. The process continuum is identified according to the stages through which a creative output is realised: conception, development, and manifestation (Moriarty 2017: 373). Having outlined a symbiotic collaboration, I then interpret the typology of fitness outcome to the balance of hierarchy and creative control between the practitioners, according to a model developed for collaboration between composers and performers (Hayden & Windsor 2007: 33). As such, a mutualistic approach suggests a collaborative environment with diffused hierarchical roles, where practitioners are at equal liberty to contribute ideas and express through their respective mediums. At the opposite end of this spectrum, parasitic collaborations are directive, with a clearly defined hierarchy, where creative control of both disciplines falls under the practitioner instigating the project. In the centre of these approaches, commensalism refers to a unilateral multidisciplinary approach, where the symbiont practitioner draws knowledge from the host discipline, while the latter experiences no further influence. It is worth pointing out that the roles of host and symbiont in their biological sense are less literally translated within the framework. If the notion of host falls under the instigating practitioner within the approach of parasitic collaboration, and who is ultimately *benefiting* by being at full creative liberty, it contradicts the biological model, where the host is harmed in parasitism. A summary of the strategies is provided in table 02.

The novel characteristic of this framework lies in the fact that each symbiotic type can be independently applied to each stage of the collaborative process, according to the specific needs of each project and the emerging dynamics between the practitioners. Rather than perpetuating a singular approach for their practice, a practitioner utilising the symbiotic framework is able to adjust their role and perspective for each different work, and embody different identities, in accordance with some areas of the posthuman discourse, portraying the posthuman as one able to embody different identities and see the world through different perspectives.²

² Posthumanism is a vast area of theoretical discourse with often conflicting view points. It is not my intention to align with a particular train of thought; rather, as with employing knowledge from the field of biology towards relating the mechanisms of symbiotic relationships within interdisciplinary collaboration, I focus on the particular aspect of 'the posthuman's ability to see the world through 'heterogenous perspectives', 'embody different identities', and employ the 'loving care people might take to learn how to see faithfully from another's point of view' (Harraway 1991: 183-190) as an important tool in constructing respectful and effective collaborative environments.

Stage	Strategy		
	<i>Mutualism</i>	<i>Commensalism</i>	<i>Parasitism</i>
Conception	equal contribution towards brief development	one discipline /practitioner becomes stimulus towards brief	instigating practitioner/ discipline defines brief
Development	both disciplines & media influencing each other	practitioners use skills independently	instigating practitioner/ discipline directs collaborator
Manifestation	both disciplines influenced by new knowledge	greater influence on one discipline/ practitioner	one discipline restricted in support of the other

Table 02 – framework for symbiotic collaboration (Moriaty 2017: 374)

Conflict

The aspect of conflict between collaborating practitioners has been a point of discussion in several studies, with the findings pointing out that although conflict is perceived as a negative aspect in social interactions, it can in fact be a creative force within the collaborative environment; ‘collaboration is not the absence of tension, but fruitful cultivation of tension’ (Moran & John-Steiner 2004: 12), with conflict used as ‘another tool to deepen understanding’ and means of dissipating ‘groupthink and competition as collaborators work out their differences’ (ibid: 20). Molecular biologist and Nobel Prize laureate Francis Crick suggests that ‘politeness... is the poison of all good collaboration’ (Abra 1997: 8). Of course, while lack of politeness refers to one’s confidence of sharing opinions with their collaborators, trust is the elements which grounds this confidence, with trust itself cultivated through respect and ‘an expectation of good will, and confidence in the other’s ability to contribute to the common purpose’ (Moran & John-Steiner 2004: 21). Furthermore, while the element of respect becomes more amplified when it involves individuals practicing different disciplines, thus placing greater emphasis on understanding each other and their respective ‘perspectives, expertise, conceptualisations, working methods, temperaments, resources, needs, and talents’ (John-Steiner 1997), it also suggests that diversity of those resources becomes a rich pool which can be creatively exploited by the collaborating practitioners.

Examining conflict in symbioses, it is worth pointing out that most animals lack the capacity to appreciate the moral and ethical implications of social interactions, and

are instead driven by an instinctive sense of survival. Considering that both organisms making up a symbiosis aim to maximise the benefit they derive from the relationship, it is easy to appreciate how conflicts may arise among amoral beings:

Organisms don't care. It's not a nice relationship. It's just biology (Forest Rohwer, in Yong 2017: 82)

However, research on symbiosis has proven that despite the conflict of interest and intermittent tensions between partners, even organisms of lower intellectual capabilities are able to manage their differences and achieve a balanced relationship. Angela Douglas suggests that this balance is achieved through an established hierarchy between host and symbiont, with the former acting as the manager of the partnership.

Conflict in symbioses is managed effectively, generally by one partner taking control... There is now evidence that the controlling partner (generally the host) can operate in multiple ways. It can reward cooperating partners and impose sanctions against cheating partners, it can reduce conflict by controlling the transmission of its partners, and it can have specific recognition mechanisms that discriminate between acceptable and potentially deleterious partners. (Douglas 2010: viii)

The aspect of conflict in symbiosis is often lost when the notion of the phenomenon is applied outside a biological context. Most dictionaries define symbiosis as mutually beneficial relationships, harmonious social interactions, and peaceful cohabitation between individuals. However, as presented earlier, it is through conflict that symbioses evolve from parasitic to mutualistic, and despite the occurrence of cheating by opportunistic partners, research demonstrates that opportunism is 'paradoxically' responsible for 'the maintenance of... cooperation itself' (Foster & Kokko 2006: 2233).

The very term symbiosis has been twisted so that its original neutral meaning – 'living together' – has been infused with positive spin, and almost flaky connotations of cooperation and harmony. But evolution doesn't work that way. It doesn't necessarily favour cooperation, even if that's in everyone's interests. (Yong 2017: 84)

Language in collaboration

Considering the manner in which symbiosis is used outside its biological context, one of the areas I investigate within my Practice Research is the wider aspect of language used within collaborative environments, and particularly individuals' reactions towards terms associated with malevolent notions. Examining some of the benign words we use to describe creative practice, such as discipline and collaboration – suggesting respectively a delimited field of study and a close associate with whom to create work – the terms also carry negative connotations; discipline refers to methods of forcible re-learning or punishment, and collaborator alludes to a traitor colluding with the enemy. But these definitions are rarely conjured in the context of interdisciplinary collaboration. Let us now consider terms mostly associated with their negative definitions, such as parasite, exploitation, and conflict. Is it possible to reclaim their positive connotations and recontextualise them within the lexicon of creative practice?

One of the case studies examined in my Practice Research is the work of performance artist Marco Donnarumma, particularly his collaboration with computer scientist Baptiste Caramiaux in developing the performance *Corpus Nil*. During a presentation I delivered in September 2017, there was an evident negative reaction from the audience when I described Donnarumma's practice within the context of my framework's parasitic approach. On one hand, such reaction is understandable when considering that the most common definition of parasite in the context of human interactions is someone who takes advantage of others without reciprocating, a sycophant, a leech, a sponge, and so on. Etymologically, the composite term derives from the Greek word for food, 'σίτος' (sitos), and the prefix 'παρ-' (para-), meaning being besides someone, with the original definition of parasite being 'one who eats at another's table' (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.). However, even according to this definition, there is no clear implication that the human parasite is unwelcome, but rather that he or she is receiving from that particular table in that moment in time. In developing the performance *Corpus Nil*, Donnarumma and Caramiaux jointly developed algorithms which are able to translate the performer's movements into control data towards generating and controlling the sonification system. While the work manifests through the solo performance of Donnarumma, it does not lessen his collaborator's contributions, as showcased in multiple publicised accounts of the work (Donnarumma 2016: 8), (Donnarumma, n.d.), (Graf 2017), where Caramiaux's role and contributions are clearly stated. In other words, it can be said that Donnarumma was successful in exploiting the resources available in the collaborative environment where Caramiaux was part of; the discipline of computer science supported the discipline of performance art by extracting necessary knowledge, thus achieving the manifestation of Donnarumma's creative vision within *Corpus Nil*. If this is

examined according to the symbiotic framework, it can be said that this particular collaborative endeavour falls under the parasitic approach. Furthermore, this approach of parasitic collaboration differs from the artisanal model employed by artists such as Damien Hirst and Andy Warhol, who in directing the labour of teams of assistants, assume and 'retain sole authorship' of the manifesting work (Roberts 2004: 558). Similarly, in the case of a composer providing musicians with a completed score which is to be performed as close as possible to the composer's vision, these approaches present again the romantic notion of the singular genius-artist. Instead, the parasitic approach presupposes joint authorship between instigating and directed practitioners; it differs from the mutualistic and commensalistic approaches in that it provides a delimited field within which the directed practitioner may express through their discipline. However, that expression remains the creation of that practitioner, and it is an augmentation of the instigating practitioner's initial vision of the work, which, following the directed practitioner's contribution, is now changed and influenced.

Exploitation is another term I have been defending within my research. While within the context of social interactions, the word is defined as 'the action of taking advantage of someone in an unfair or unethical manner' (OED, n.d.), in the context of interacting with resources, e.g. land cultivation or extraction of carbon-based fuels, exploitations refer to 'the action of deriving benefit from something by making full or good use of it' (ibid). In the context of creative practice involving interdisciplinary collaboration, the disciplinary knowledge and abilities of each practitioner constitute the resources available towards the development of creative outcomes. As such, the more these resources are exploited by both practitioners, or made good use of, the better chances there are for a meaningful outcome to emerge. Quite like types of symbiotic relationships are context-dependant, so is language. Let us not forget that the word parasite was widely used by mainstream media and governmental officials in branding vulnerable people in society; the unemployed, migrants and refugees, the differently able, and so on. The notion of symbiosis demonstrates the temporary nature of relationships, and through developing cooperation and trust between different species, the evolutionary trend dictates that antagonistic parasitisms will evolve to reciprocal mutualisms.

Conflict in collaborative practice

In examining the aspect of conflict as creative tool within collaborative environments, I began reflecting on my collaborations over the duration of my Practice Research candidacy with the aim of identifying the ways tension have affected both the work and the social relation with my work partners. This examination was fuelled by a recent discussion-turned interview with friend and sound artist Alexandros Drymonitis, where he described his experience during

working as part of the Athens-based collective Medea Electronique towards developing the digital opera *Echo and Narcissus*. Developed by a group of eleven members, with Drymonitis acting as the sound artist and programmer, the group's core members – dramaturgist, script writer, sound artist/programmer, and composer – approached the collaboration through the mutualistic model, i.e. without any clear hierarchy on decision making. According to Drymonitis' accounts, this resulted in a flurry of opinions given by all members on all subjects, resulting in high tensions whenever the collective worked together, often verging on rudeness (Drymonitis 2018). I then asked whether this tension has been extended into the personal relationships between the members, to which he firmly replied no. In fact, focused roles began to emerge as a result of these heated exchanges, and due to the frank exchanges, each member's characters began to unfold resulting in deeper understanding between the members. In contrast, the further seven members who were not part of the core decision-making group were less vocal in stating their opinions on the work. Drymonitis stated certain level of disappointment in the lack of interaction and feedback from these members.

From this account, I began examining is there is a correlation between the tensions in the practice environment and the social aspects of a collaboration by reflecting on my collaborative work. From this I considered whether the works developing without conflict resulted in less close social interactions and familiarity with my collaborators, and to some extent to lesser quality of my contributions towards the completion of the works. Informing this reflection on a model similar to Hayden and Windsor's accounts on their collaborative works (Hayden & Windsor 2007: 36), I assessed my collaborations according to the criteria of tension in the collaborative environment, tension in the social environment, quality of my sonic contributions, and whether the collaboration persisted or became dissolved following the work completion. A summary of the findings is presented in table 03.

From reflecting on my different experiences during each collaboration, while the initial aim was to correlate presence of tension in the collaborative environment as a way of improving the social relationship, the results were ambiguous on this subject; work with performance artist Frances Kay and physical actor Ali Matthews were conducted in a commensalistic manner, where each practitioner remained within their respective disciplinary boundaries, and which lacked tension and conflict in the work's direction. However, in the case of Kay, profound tensions began emerging in our social interactions, which eventually resulted in the collaboration dissolving. This was not the case with Matthews, where social interactions remained cordial, with the collaboration dissolving following the presentation due to conflicting professional commitments. The other point of interest was that both of the aforementioned collaborations resulted in works where

I personally assessed that my contribution was of lesser quality. In contrast, my collaborations where tension was present in the collaborative environment resulted in higher quality works.

Collaborator	Tension in collaborative environment	Tension in social environment	Quality of musical work	Persistence of collaboration
Ali Matthews	None	None	Moderate	Dissolved
Ana Berkenhoff	Present	None	Satisfactory	Dissolved
Frances Kay	None	Present	Poor	Dissolved
Lucie Lee	Present	None	Satisfactory	Persisting
Teresia Björk	Present	Present	Satisfactory	Persisting

Table 03 – reflection and assessment of collaborations

The collaboration with actor and sound artist Ana Berkenhoff was approached through the mutualistic model, and while the collaborative environment was beset with conflicting views on the work’s direction, the presented works were deemed satisfactory by both parties, while personal relationships remained positive. In my work with choreographer, dancer, and visual artist Lucia Lee, we developed the work *DeviceD* through an initially mutualistic approach, which later evolved to parasitic where I became the instigating practitioner. In reflection, it was often that my direction presented challenges to Lee, both in regards to her digital visualisations and the way our utilised wearable system was affecting her choreography. However, through building our personal relationships to a level of trust, her opinion was confidently voiced whenever she disagreed with my direction. Presently, my collaboration with Lee endures, and we are currently developing our second performance. Finally, my work with dancer and choreographer Teresia Björk on the piece *Vi-We-Nous* was also plagued with highly charged tensions in the collaborative environment, which further materialised in our social relationships. I entered this collaboration under the impression of a commensalistic approach, where I would respond to Björk’s prompts by independently creating a score for her choreography, which later turned parasitic with Björk assuming the instigating role. However, due to her lack of knowledge in computer music production, her requests for precise technical outcomes were often given either at near-impossible timeframes, or with ambiguous instructions. This resulted in high levels of stress during my work, further amplified with a less than cordial attitude from Björk, such as frequent reminders of the group’s hierarchy, and insensitive comments in regards

to my lifestyle choices and ethnic origin. Regardless of these tensions, I must acknowledge that Björk's creative decisions were in their majority appropriate, and improved the development of my contributions, ultimately resulting in a work I assessed as being of high quality. One interpretation of what I construed as a domineering attitude can be traced in our distinct training approaches – one academic while the other vocational – amplified by the differences in our personalities and cultural backgrounds. Nonetheless, these tensions were ultimately resolved, and following the initial round of performances of *Vi-We-Nous* in Stockholm and Beijing during 2016, the collaboration persists, with the work recently presented in Uppsala, and further showing planned for the near future.

Conclusion

My experience during the development of *Vi-We-Nous* provided a useful skill set for future collaboration, and amplified the necessity for respect between collaborators as a way of managing tensions in the collaborative environment. While the initial assumption – tension in the collaborative environment with lack of tension in social interactions – turned out to have no correlation, what was evident from reflecting on my collaborations was that tension in the collaborative environment resulted in sonic contributions of higher quality. However, it is important to stress that these personal reflections concern the work between two individuals at a specific time and place. As such, I present these under no suggestion that are part of repeatable experiments, able to be reproduced by other practitioners. Individuality in character, the dynamic nature of externalised personalities, and the context-dependent reactions to our environments are fundamental aspects of being, and to suggest that the experience of two individuals at a specific time and place can accurately be repeated by others is to overlook these aspects.

The enduring element of this research, however, remains the flexible and adaptive framework for symbiotic collaboration. Utilised as both an analytical tool in reflection and guide towards ongoing collaborations, the framework demonstrates the close relation of relationships between diverse humans and those among diverse non-humans. Furthermore, it serves as yet more proof of the humanist criticism by posthumanist theories, reminding us of the moot points of anthropocentrism and its fascination with the elevated status of humans among nature's vast biological diversity. Having witnessed the framework's activation as a facilitating aspect within collaborative works by my current students as well as peers' practices, I consider this research to hold potential for future expansion through further studies into social behaviour, sociobiology, and evolutionary mechanisms.

Bibliography

- Abra, J. (1997). *Collaboration in Creative Work: An Initiative for Investigation*. Creativity Research Journal, 7 (1): 1-20
- Boddington, G. and Bannerman, C. (2004). *Sharing the process: a consideration of inter-authorship in the performing arts*. Digital Creativity, 15 (2): 76-80
- Donnarumma, M. (2016). *Configuring Corporeality: Performing Bodies, Vibrations and New Musical Instruments*. PhD Thesis: Goldsmiths, University of London
- Douglas, A.E. (2010). *The symbiotic habit*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press
- Drymonitis, A. (2018, March 19). Personal Interview
- Foster, K.R and Kokko, H. (2006). *Cheating can stabilize cooperation in mutualisms*. Proc. R. Soc. B 273 (1598): 2233-2239
- Frederickson, M.E. (2017) *Mutualisms are not on the verge of breakdown*. Trends in Ecology & Evolution, 32 (10): 727-734
- Graf, V. (2017). *'Corpus Nil': A Performance by Man and Artificial Intelligence*. Ars Electronica Blog, Accessed 2 April 2018, <https://www.aec.at/aeblog/en/2017/09/04/corpus-nil/>
- Goodhead, I. (2017, December 12). Personal interview
- Haraway, D.J. (1991). *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge
- Hayden, S. and Windsor, L. (2007). *Collaboration and the Composer: Case Studies from the End of the 20th Century*. Cambridge University Press, Tempo 61 (240): 28-39
- John-Steiner, V. (2000). *Creative Collaboration*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Martin, B.D. and Schwab, E. (2012a). *Current Usage of Symbiosis and Associated Terminology*. International Journal of Biology, 5 (1): 32-45
- Miller, L.E. (2001). *Cage, Cunningham, and Collaborators: The Odyssey of Variations V*. The Musical Quarterly, Oxford University Press, 85 (3): 545-567

Moran, S. and John-Steiner, V. (2004) *How Collaboration in Creative Work Impacts Identity and Motivation*. In: Miell, D. and Littleton, K. (ed.). *Collaborative Creativity: Contemporary Perspectives*. London: Free Association Books

Moriarty, M. (2017). *Symbiosis: Interspecific associations in collaborative practice*. Carbon Meets Silicon symposium, Proceedings of the Seventh ITA International Conference. Wrexham Glyndŵr University

Niculescu, B. (1998). *The Transdisciplinary Evolution of the University Condition for Sustainable Development*. Accessed 12 March 2016,
<http://cirt-transdisciplinarity.org/bulletin/b12c8.php>

Paracer, S. and Ahmadjian, V. (2000). *Symbiosis: An Introduction to Biological Associations*. New York: Oxford University Press

Roberts, J. (2004). *Collaboration as a problem of art's cultural form*. Third Text 18 (6): 557-564 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0952882042000284961>

Yong, E. (2017) *I Contain Multitudes*. New York: Ecco

THE VICIOUS CYCLE OF ART. CREATIVE PROCESS WITHIN ACADEMY, SOCIAL CRISIS, AND CONTRADICTIONS IN THE MEXICAN CONTEXT.

Giovanna Castillejos Saucedo, Nizai González Machado

Abstract

We are presenting a video-documentation that discusses the boundaries defining the singularity of art and the modification due to the shift of artistic practices towards social and scientific methodologies; including a debate about the Academic Institution. Our purpose is to present a critical point of view explaining that this perspective of the transcendence of art is found in a cyclical movement that tends to consume itself or as stated in this conference to eat itself. On the other hand, we are also presenting the collective work that we have done at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana – Xochimilco and on our achieved perspective in art, which instead of prioritizing its ontological discussion, focuses on it as a working tool of the contradictions between social environment; the conjunction of circumstances, and artistic expertise involved in our context. This approach comes from a dialectic logic and represents our distinctive view of the specificity of the crisis in our own social environment, and documents how the introspective nature of the creative process, as well as the material and circumstances involved, can become different methodologies and organizations that conceive a social transformation.

Our findings come from the ongoing investigation of the contexts in which the paradigms of artistic research are found. We observed that while the economic development of the environment in European states; translated into the exploitation of the material and intellectual conditions of life, have situated the artistic processes in a territorial competition, in which the academy is a new field. In the case of Mexico, art represents a means of communication between the individual and community, between the ego and otherness, in a society that grows within contradictions.

The Vicious Cycle

The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story. . . The consequence of the single story is this: It robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal

humanity difficult. It emphasizes how we are different rather than how we are similar.

Chimamanda Gnozi Adichie

The context of our Mexican present is that of contradictions, an environment of imaginary dichotomies of people that live under the frenzy of immediacy and fugacity. These contradictions come and go between the local and the global way of living, between our similarities and differences, between being dominant to being dominated, between the yearning of being and never getting there.¹

Because this condition confronts our way of living, it has awakened in us a deep interest to study how the creative processes can intervene on those circumstances as a means of transformation. That is why we have dedicated the last two years of work to the research of artistic practices and the bonds between artistic languages and conflicts of the Social Sciences. But ¿How to start a study on art practices when art has been cut up with the ambiguity of our reality?

To answer this question, we propose a critical overview to analyze the restraining problematic of art in our context. These are, on the one hand, the limits of self-absorption or singularization of art in Mexico and its necessity to redirect them towards the development of new social and scientific methodologies. On the other hand, we talk about how the creative individual is devoured inside the vicious cycle of art and the necessity of a dialectic methodology that can help us escape the endless repetitions of its circle.

In Mexico, the institutional frame of art is that of an imposed copy of the hegemonic model that comes from the occidental meta-narratives of art, from the evolution of philosophical thinking (especially those of the XVIII and XIX centuries in Europe), and from the technical and material needs stated on the trends of consumption of the capitalist system. In the previous statement we clarify that when we speak of an imposed copy we are not being derogatory, but refer to an insufficient structure of art for Mexicans because European historic line and evolution are separated from our own reality; therefore there is a lack of understanding of the actual production of art in our country.

¹ We would like to acknowledge and thank all the following people for taking such an important part of this ongoing research, you all have enrich every single path on this collective way: Ana Julia Arroyo Urióstegui, Karen Anahí del Ángel González, Sandra Amelia Martí, Martha I. Flores Ávalos, Alfredo Flores Pérez, Paula Barquera Mondragón, María Azucena Mondragón Millán, Blanca Tello Hernández, Mariana Ruiz, Jessica Rubi Ríos Rodríguez, Claudia Huidobro, Eduardo Miguel Medina Robles, Cecilia D. Rivera Gámez, María Penélope Vargas Estrada, Vanessa Leonor Quintero Hernández, Leinad Johan Alcalá Sandoval, Isaías Peralta Vélez, Fernando León R. Molina, Isaura Eugenia Sánchez Hernández, Itza Amanda Varela Huerta and to the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Xochimilco.

The implication of this forced copy is that art in Mexico remains strictly a formal and technical activity;

[...] even though the romantic concepts of genius, creativity, feeling, mystery and expression still prevail in the mind of our societies, these concepts are in fact obsolete and separated from the social necessities and problematic of contemporary art. Therefore, the production of art in Mexico is testimonial, decorative and omits the importance of its ideological, educative and informative dimensions that gives the possibility of being a sociocultural phenomenon to improve the social conditions of life. (Mejía, 2010: 1)

This mystified way of art increases and endures ambiguity in our reality, so it is fundamental to our wellbeing to break out of it and confront the conflicts that bind all activities for social change. For us, this insinuation implies the need of a work of critical and auto-critical reflection and analysis of the relationships between our living realities and the institutional framework of art. This means to identify the ways that the philosophical contents of aesthetics and art theory have been influencing, contradict or are in fact operating in our day a day lives.

With this proposal we are embracing the value of the anthropological and sociological theories of art² that have been reformulating its scenario along with the philosophical field. In this sense, we underline the social praxis of art as a turning point for all artistic sectors, but only when the praxis acknowledges its role as a way to produce new forms of social interaction and therefore, new knowledge and social and scientific methodologies.

Overall, this self-absorption or singularization of art exploits, as Canclini says, '[...] an uninvolved aesthetic experience and emphasizes the decayed function of art that relives the drama of our hopes for freedom' (2010: 10). In these circumstances we find another problem for art



² Works as in Walter Benjamin's *The Work of Art in the Age of Industry* and Hal Foster's *The Artist as Ethnographer*?

in Mexico, the vicious cycle of art, or as Pérez sees it, '[...] a repetitive way of compensating the dissatisfactions of a reality that only offers chaos and speculation'. (2014: 49) (DIAGRAM 1)

We address this cycle as in Pérez's analogy to the vision of Dante Alighieri;

[...] a vicious cycle of every human being because there is no human experience that doesn't cross (in its own way) the path of The *Divine Comedy*: Hell, Purgatory and Paradise or as we understand it, from the darkness of night to an ascendant depuration and up to the light of clarity that allows to take on actions with a personal sense. (2014: 49)

In our context, this experience derives from a 'reality that constantly denies our existence and because of that we live a condition of dissatisfactions and a permanent feeling that tell us that we do not belong in this global world' (Pérez, 2014: 50). In this acute situation we have two common options, either we continue with the inertia of being what we are told to be, or we act from a sense of emergency that leaves us with meaningless actions. (DIAGRAM 2)

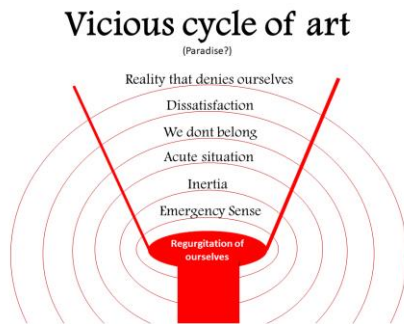


Diagram 2. Levels of the Vicious Cycle of art.

That is why we can see a permanent tendency of a cathartic transgression in Mexican artwork, works that do manifest the sensibility of the chaos but never suggest actions to change and overcome the discomfort.

We believe that in this cycle the artist walks Dante's path with a naivette and imaginary consciousness, because when the artist presents his artwork, that is to say his new meaning or order of the chaos, he realizes it doesn't make any

change in himself or in his social reality, so he finds himself with the same anguish that will again turn him back towards the darkness.

From this condition of denial and reclaiming the initial provocation stated in this conference– *that artistic research will eat itself*– we take a few steps back (before we discuss artistic research) to present the main reason we enter this new field, that the Mexican artist keeps eating himself and his artwork is the incomplete digestion and regurgitation of his discomfort of life.

The metaphor of the artist eating himself also explains his precarious condition because he lives repeating the same denial that reality forces on him. In other words, the artist is a being that keeps nullifying himself. He denies himself by refusing the economical and political model in which he lives and therefore loses all rights as a citizen. He denies himself when he decides to start a “revolutionary” project for which he doesn’t have the means, and he pushes his economic and social conditions to the limit. We believe that in this condition the artist lives in the illusion of reaching paradise and never making it there.

To sum up, working from the academic field to rebuild the notion of art as a means of the production of knowledge, gives us the possibility to settle the limits and vices we just mentioned, but only if we recognize that this kind of knowledge could be used as a way of transformation. So, we consider this proposal as a dialectic movement in which the transcendence of art is not found on a circular structure but in a process that involves a creative path, or as we will explain later, a *procesualidad* (or set of processes for transformation) in which a diversity of *recognition*³ movements will help us to understand reality in a complementary manner and open new dialogues for beneficial relationships between the human being and his world.

The Collective Work

These reflections are some of the results of the work of 3 seminars dedicated to the study of artistic research. From the beginning, as we have already mention, the purpose of this investigation has been to design a form of research that gives us the possibility of overcoming the contradictions that we deal with in our professional and academic fields as well in our daily lives. In this section, we want to point out the creative process as a means of development for new methodologies and organizations in which transformation could no longer be a possibility but a fact. To this end it is necessary to outline our starting frame and

³ As Gadamer refers to it: ‘to recognize does not mean to see something again. It means to acknowledge something that is already known’ (1991:53).

the concepts that we have used to approach the first two parts of this research project.

Our starting points are the conceptual, educational and research frameworks of the Science and Arts for Design Division (CyAD) of the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana- Xochimilco Faculty. The structure of this university is a teaching-learning model called Modular System (Arbesú, Berruecos, 1996), in which a theoretical-practical approach towards social development is stated. This is an interdisciplinary proposal of creative action as a means of transformation for different problematics of reality, or as the university described them, *transformational objects*.

The notion of *transformational objects* is a founding stone for our research because of its interdisciplinary approach and its work with a

[...] co-relative dynamic between the subject and the object of study. This dynamic redesigns the ways of doing and understanding research in the sense that the study of a problem purport an action of *Knowing/transforming*; that is to use auto-reflection and auto-criticism to identify a particular perspective for undertaking the analysis of a problem, to be able to recognize individual possibilities to intervene the surroundings and at the same time, to transform the previous ideas with the new knowledge acquired. (Castillejos, González, 2016:52)

The Modular System, although an innovating proposal, does have some problems. First, the notions of art and design are unfinished concepts of its structural and theoretical frame; therefore their practices never reach the problems of reality. Second, they both remain as formal and technical tools that use just a bit of social research methodologies.

The problem in this scenario is one of translating theory to practice, because it lacks the proper links in which the practice, design and knowledge of art works as a complementary means to build interdisciplinary strategies for research. From this problematic field we identify the nature of the relationship between art, design and knowledge as a means for transformation, as a fundamental route of inquiry for our investigation.

Continuing along this direction and from the understanding that the source of these deficiencies is: the divided tradition of the production of knowledge, the surrounding subjectivities in artistic practices and the aesthetic separation from ethical and epistemological areas. We recover the proposal of artistic practices as

a way of knowledge production, thus the international discussions of the possibilities of Artistic Research as an academic program, with an analytic and singular approach.

With this singular approach, we are referring to a study that undertakes the active way of the subject-object co-relationship while analyzing the Scientific Method and the new social movements that have changed its field. In other words, we are trying to add complementary reflections to the studies of art, design and knowledge with an auto-critique of ourselves as researches, and of the ways we conceive and practice research.

For this purpose, we have developed two lanes of investigation. The first one studies the nature of academic and artistic research. We first analyze its paradigms, conflicts and associations to other disciplines, its recursive and representative possibilities and its institutional and operative encounters. Then we examine the insertion of art in the social context and we ponder about the social sphere and its theoretical structure following our own perceptions of the ways that a social environment conditions artistic practices, and the manner in which the theoretical principles materialize through practice and about the different forms of art in the Mexican context. (DIAGRAM 3)

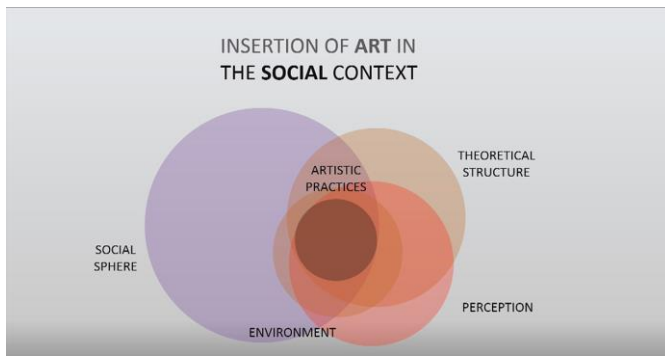


Diagram 3. Insertion of Art in the Social Context.

From all this work we want to point out the social character of practice base research as Borgdorff (2005) and Gibbons (1994) do, justifying the practice of research on the academic field just as on the social one. For us, this is one of the principal bonds between artistic research and the Modular System, because to

transform the problems of reality, people of the context of application must have an active voice on the research process. We understand this as an investigative aspect of the social praxis of art in which several processes or “procesualidades” will be determined by the practice.

To clarify the concept;

‘[...] *procesualidad* refers to the human capacity to transform knowledge, imaginaries, environments and himself; in other words, a way for human beings to mediate with the world through multiple relationships and processes’. (Pérez, 2014: 112)

We synthesize this concept as *Creative Process*, which means, actions with a proper sense of a set of non-linear and simultaneous processes that provides the creative individual with his own logical view of reality and existence.

Undertaking the creative process as a strategy for artistic research entails to keep academic strictness and the coherent organization of the traditional way of investigation, thus the creative subject faces the monumental task of taking all the experiences or steps of his creative process and bring them to consciousness. We defined those experiences as: Pre-reflection, encounter with otherness, selective interiorization, conceptualization, critical reflection and materialization. In each and everyone of those steps, the subject come and go from reflection to practice and from the abstract to the tangible, the effort here is to translate these experiences and reflections to an adequate language so it can be communicated.

Since this process parts from a practical awareness of a specific problem, it is not only the creative subject who will recognize his environment and himself, but all the people involved who will make a new sense and obtain a new voice that will make possible to embrace transformational actions on a collective way.

In these types of dynamics, we propose a joint authorship of practice-based research, a conceptual figure that gathers knowledge and insights that will make sense of the creative actions as a resilient artistic phenomenon or *acontecimiento*. In this respect, we agree that it is in fact the place of discovery or context the place where all the methods, languages and techniques are designed to answer to its specific needs, therefore they will materialize in all kinds of projects and will not necessarily end as works of art.

Under this articulation the creative process provides us with research on self-management to recreate methodologies as critical pedagogics to help us build

new knowledge, experiences and interactions for a new way of life. That is why we consider artistic research as a means to reclaim the work as a complementary proposal for academic formulas; dialectic logic of the creative process that offers the possibilities of changing our contradictions and breaks away from the vicious cycles of art.

Everything we have presented is some of the results of our work in the first two seminars of Artistic Research in UAM-Xochimilco, from which we have designed two practices that contributed to our creative process approach. These are:

The first was a collective and experimental practice of the subject-object co-relationship on the reflections of academic and artistic research with the purpose of suggesting a new perspective to our own research work. The practice meshed a theoretical analysis with several practices and knowledge of the participants on a collective text, under the joint-authorship figure and a simultaneous participation in Google Drive. This activity supported the idea of the construction of critical pedagogies for production of collective knowledge. The resulting document on the theoretical reflections was published in the magazine, *Design and Society*, spring 2016.

The second was a collage making the path between abstract and tangible knowledge apparent. The focus of this exercise was to demonstrate the conceptual work we all undertake while doing research. Also, it activated the acquired knowledge and rearranged it according to the experience and desires of each participant, thus it forced them to face a non-conceptual language, visual experiences and sensibilities that lead us to self-observation, auto-criticism and to overcome our problem areas. This theoretical-practical activity was presented as a visual communication and a written article on the III International Congress of Visual Arts, ANIAV, 2017.

Paradigms for Artistic Research in Mexico

We feel it is of great importance to show the path we have followed in order to explain the sense of artistic research in Mexico City. Mexico has its own rhythms and needs that demand different approaches than those of European countries, where artistic research has been discussed and developed further and for a longer period. It is in this difference that we find the possibility to break out of the vicious cycle of art as well of this closed box that is the solitary practice of art.

On its own, artistic research is already a possibility for us to come nearer to our social reality on a horizontal, inclusive and participative way. So, how to add another sense if Mexican politics keeps making us invisible, disrupting us, dividing us and taking us every day to an even more precarious way of life? This

is our life! Art and life are two notions that occur at the same time, that is why we decided to go further into the particularities of research and art to a discussion that exceeds the academic aspect. In other words, the fundamental characteristic of artistic research in Mexico will be an exercise of unification, first our thoughts, and not as a solitary activity but as a collective way of understanding the importance of listening to each other. Second, to the vital links we share until we have a better appreciation of what we are experiencing.

To unfold artistic research as a means towards unification, it is crucial to vindicate the creative process as a process of the human equation or hominization. This concept refers to the vital essence of human beings, the process of transformation through a creative action. In this regard, Francisco Perez, a Mexican philosopher says, 'in order to be, the human being needs to create a proper world at every single moment. He will be able to do this by creating and creating himself through his work, so his becoming is muddled with the creation of new things. In other words, to create, is in fact the genesis of the act of living.' (Pérez Cortés, 2014:322)

The creative process under this criteria, gives an intimate nature to the links in a way that doesn't eradicate the differences between people but, tries to 'capture life and at the same time leads to the vitality of life, unfolds each person's singularity and liberates the strength of life everywhere, even on the places they are still hiding' (Pérez Cortés, 2014:320). Thus, artistic research becomes the manifestation of a process in which every human affair is undertaken as a permanent act of transformation. To capture this manifestation the following activities become fundamental actions: systematization, documentation, analysis and divulgation.

To tackle this task, we gathered a group of people from different areas to reflect on the requirements for a dialogue about our perception of the creative process within the problems of social realities. To this end, we underline the urgency of analyzing the cognitive value of the creative process and how to build and divulge the new production of knowledge. Furthermore, we divert our attention from the production of objects to the organizations and social practices, to the contexts that we share, even if they are uncomfortable or problematic, to a place where the sensitive aspect bonds with critical reflections, work, perception and emotion. We believe that it is from this association that artistic research can embrace the reconfiguration of the artistic, aesthetic, political and economic aspects of our context.

To expose the structure of our proposal with more precision, we want to present the reflections resulting from our encounter. These are arranged on six different topics that share the same discussions: The institutional criticism, the artistic link between ethics and philosophy, the critical pedagogy, the collective and communitarian ways of organization, and the contemporaneous capitalist model. (DIAGRAM 4)

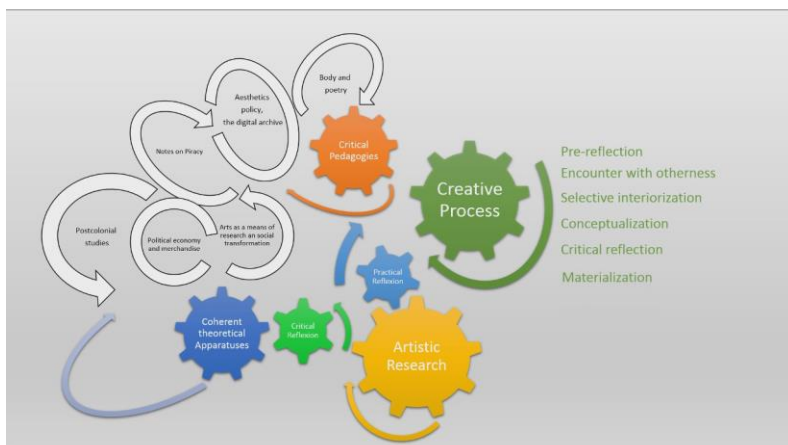


Diagram 4. Proposal for Artistic Research in Mexico.

1. A critique of the political economy and merchandise

We identify the need to understand the basic elements of contemporaneous capitalism because in our university, art and design are research disciplines that almost never embrace a critical role of the economic model that tends to subsume its practices and objects to the ideologies of consumerism. It also alienates the creative work through different representations of private property. Due to this, we believe that it is through the analysis of the social division of creative work in its fundamental categories (the rational exercise, the formulation of ideas, the organization of our material conditions and our temporary and spiritual aspirations), that we will discover the level of awareness for the need to a social praxis of art in our context.

2. Art as a means of research and social transformation

Artistic production as man-made work that unfolds within the capitalist machine, shares the quality of being subsumed by its determinations, but also has the possibility of breaking out from them. So, we undertake this line of investigation

to reflect on the alienation of art and its capabilities to transform itself. A dialectic way of studying the individual limits that are the results of social stereotypes on a day-to-day basis. We believe this dialectic movement will allow us to recognize the ideological bindings of our own culture and so, by a corporal and material experimentation we will transgress and overcome them.

3. Notes on piracy

This topic addresses reflections of the idea of a one of a kind object, or what we call, the “phantom of the original”. In this matter, we identify how this idea is involved on the ways in which the arts are taught and on the social organizations for creative work. The phantom of the original comes from the modern period of time and reflects an aspirational ideology that justifies the ways of control, power, sensorial manipulation, exploitation, coercion and dispossession. All these forces dispel the possibilities that the creative work has for building a bridge of dialogue towards the awareness or resolution of social problems. In the end, working according to this ideal, the artist tends to extract the local, popular or exotic representations into a significance that reduces people to merchandise. The analysis of piracy will allow us to see new ways of producing art without ending up with merely merchandise.

4. Aesthetic policy: the digital archive

This is a new sense added to the rational and sensitive experience of living, the virtual life and the archive. This dimension supposes an unnecessary reconfiguration of people’s experiences because it diversifies and multiplies the needs of a person and then it reduces them to storage of digital data. This situation underlines a form of aesthetic that materializes as an anguish to connect and disconnect from the virtual experience. How to get artistic research to manage its praxis towards a social awareness that builds within the virtual scenario? This question suggests locating the aesthetic and material production as a political decision that accepts the new nature of everyday experience; to think about the artistic object as an aesthetic device.

5. Postcolonial studies

Under the context of postcolonial criticism, a “decolonial” turn and subaltern studies, it is up to us to approach this problem not only as a theoretical statement that puts our peripheral identity under question, but as a way that implies recognizing ourselves as bifascetic beings and with that, to represent human development through a dialectic way in which we are both, economic and cultural subjects. Thus, we wonder about the conditions that will allow us to organize the creative process to disband the colonial forms and to create a human model that takes its structure from the analysis of our cultural dependence as well as from the philosophies of liberation.

6. Body and Poetry

This last topic relates to the aesthetic and contemporaneous artistic practices that think about the human body as a mediator and transformational axis for the uses and discourses of space, time and the social, political, economic and cultural organizations. This proposal searches for the manifestation of our cultural dependence. This involves an activity in which the body leads the mind, so the person can experience psycho-corporeal states and different types of emotions that will help to realize how processes of awareness work. We believe we can achieve this goal using the body weather technique, which is a manipulation of the body that allows a reorganization of our sensitive memory, that is, to get to a new state of awareness by reaching emotions and thoughts that are usually hidden from us.

Temporary reflections

Even though we don't have a solid conclusion for this ongoing investigation yet, we believe in the conceptual figure of the creative process as a transformational action that its already helping us to face the problems of our reality, and in constructing autonomous projects that are leading us to new knowledge, social practices and pedagogies with which we are changing the art research modes in our university and hopefully, soon enough, we will find new types of art practices that are coherent with a country such as Mexico; a place that grows within contradictions.

*First of all, ask yourselves about the quietest time of night,
then look into the depths of your mind. Should I create?*

Rainer Maria Rilke

Bibliography

- Arbesú, I., Berruecos L. (1996) *El Sistema Modular en la Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana*. México: UAM-X.
- Borgdorff, H. (2005). Available at: https://konst.gu.se/digitalAssets/1322/1322713_the_debate_on_research_in_the_art_s.pdf (Accessed: 20 July 2015)
- Canclini, N. (2010) *La sociedad sin relato. Antropología y estética de la inminencia*. Uruguay: Katz Editores, p. 10.
- Castillejos, G., González, N. (2016) 'Investigación Artística: reflexión colectiva, intervención experimental' *Diseño y Sociedad. Núm. 40, Spring, p. 52. México: UAM Xochimilco*. ISSN 0188-7025
- Gadamer, H. (1991) *La actualidad de lo bello*. Barcelona: Ediciones Paidós, p. 53.

- Gibbons, M. (et.al.) (1994) *The New Production of Knowledge. The Dynamics of Science and Research in Contemporary Societies*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Mejía, I. (2010) 'El Arte Frente a las Problemáticas Sociales' *Escritos Sobre Arte*. Available at: <https://sites.google.com/site/contemporaryartcriticism/home/escritos-sobre-arte/el-arte-frente-a-las-problematicas-sociales-1>
- Pérez, F. (2014) *Crear Crearse. Engendrar y Dar Vida a una Obra Viva*. México: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, pp. 49,50, 112, 320, 322.
- Rilke, R. M. (2010) *Cartas a un joven poeta*. Libros en Red. Available at: <http://www.librosenred.com/triviaregalos/1a2s3d4f/6515-cartas%20a%20un.pdf>
- TedGlobal Video (*The danger of a single story*, 2009).

THE (CAKE) STALL OF ALTERNATIVE THOUGHTS
Monica Shanta Brown

‘The (Cake) Stall Of Alternative Thoughts’

A pop-up café installation and performance ‘The (Cake) Stall Of Alternative Thoughts’ stood alongside the food offer during the conference lunch on Friday 13th April 2018 from 1.00 til 2.30 and during the coffee break from 4.00 to 4.30.

The installation consisted of ;

- A looped film projection of clouds moving through a blue sky
- A long table on which were Word Menus, Words with definition and etymology, Contracts/Licences, Pens and Cakes
- Two round tables with 3 chairs, and one round table with 6 chairs.

Words on the menu were;

Artistic

Categorisation Cognition Collective Consciousness Continuum Culture

Diaspora Digest Discourse Duality

Embodiment Empiricism Epistemology Etymology Exchange

Hybrid

Introspection

Metaphysical Methodology Migration

Ontological

Paradigm Paradox

Reciprocal Reflexive Relevance Research

Society

Transcendence Trans-global

Unambivalent

All visitors to ‘The (Cake) Stall Of Alternative Thoughts’ are served by Monica.

Visitors are served with a Word accompanied by its definition and etymology. All

Words come with a choice of cake; Banana Bread, Lemon Drizzle Cake,

Chocolate Brownie (vegan), or Flapjack (gluten free).

All sentences spoken by Monica interacting and conversing with visitors offer open ended choice. Visitors are invited by Monica to enter into a contract with ‘The (Cake) Stall of Alternative Thoughts’ to obtain a licence for unlimited use of their



2. The (Cake) Stall of Alternative Thoughts Installation



3. Words on the Menu



4. Visitors to the Stall

Bibliography

- Waite, M. (ed.) (2013) *Pocket Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Derrida, J. (1987) *Cinders*. Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press.

**PANEL: CRITICAL DIGESTION, ESTRANGEMENT AND CRITIQUE:
WAYS OF REGENERATION FOR ARTISTIC RESEARCH**

Nicolaj van der Meulen, Jörg Wiesel, Silvia Henke, Aurel Sieber, Henryetta
Duerschlag

Abstract

The definition of research still seems to be questionable as it pertains to art: it is unclear and indeterminate. It suffers from a lack of criteria, and a proper understanding of practical and theoretical tools. Rather than sharpen the term either with or in difference to scientific knowledge production or processes of experimentation, the panel proposed by the Swiss interdisciplinary Sinergia research project ‘Practices of Aesthetic Thinking’ (<https://sinergia-pat.ch/>) aims to shift the perspective away from concepts of research towards a preliminary question: In what sense can art be described as a unique way (rather than a method) of thinking in itself, of critique, or of practices of (un)learning and (non)comprehension? With its three related topoi of ‘praxis,’ ‘aesthetics,’ and ‘thought,’ the project emphasizes that first, thinking is a practice in itself, and practice is thinking, secondly, art is based in ‘percepts’ (Deleuze), grounded in what the Greek language considered as the ‘arche-passivity’ of *aisthēsis*, and thirdly, art provides certain modes of aesthetico-practical reflexivity by showing itself.

The following subject, which can be entitled by “ways of regeneration for artistic research” is divided into four separate parts: Digression and Digestion as Aesthetic Practice, van der Meulen/Wiesel (1); How to become strange, Henke (2); Essayistic practices as a model for artistic research, Sieber (3) and The dimension of Critique (4).

SELF-DIGESTION ANIMATES ARTISTIC RESEARCH. DIALOGUE AS AESTHETIC PRACTICE

Nicolaj van der Meulen, Jörg Wiesel

Abstract

This essay highlights the potential of aesthetic practice as critique – a new perspective on artistic research. Aesthetic practice, in our view, includes practices based on material experience, skills (*techné*) and judgment as the basic conditions of design and art practices. Aesthetic critique as an artistic way of thinking cannot be reduced to doubting, disassembling and negating, but in various ways connects doubting with offering, disassembling with generating, and reflective understanding with progressive forms of acting. A close consideration of cooking and eating as aesthetic practices will shed light on various links between autolysis, transformation, pleasure and conviviality, not only for the aesthetic field in general, but for artistic research in particular. Our observations derive from a fictional dialogue from 1769 between art critic Denis Diderot and mathematician Jean Le Rond d'Alembert. In the form of a literary digression, Diderot fictitiously pulverizes Étienne-Maurice Falconet's marble statue "Pygmalion et Galatée" (1763) to make it digestible. The goal of this speculation is nothing less than to demonstrate the blissfulness of all matter – a paradigm of artistic practices

Introduction

Self-digestion in relation to its technical term "autolysis" refers to the self-dissolution of dead body cells through the action of enzymes that already exist in the tissue. Autolysis is one of the first steps in the process of post mortem decay. With regard to bread-making, "autolysis" or "autolyze" characterizes a period of rest after the initial mixing of flour and water, before other ingredients such as salt are added to the dough. Autolysis was first described (although practiced much earlier in bread baking) by Raymond Calvel, chemist and baker, in his book "Le Gout du Pain" (1974).¹ Calvel stated that the rest period allows links to form between the water, gluten and starch, and he recommended an autolytic process of between 20 minutes and one hour. [ill. 1] The chemical process of autolysis builds up a stable dough texture or architecture and yields at least a better and more complex taste of the bread.

¹ Raymond Calvel: *Le gout du pain*, Paris (Jérôme Villette) 1990. (engl. The Taste of Bread, New York [Springer] 2001.

Artistic research, for some reasons, has passed through a comparable process of autolysis, in our view a necessary stage, where the deconstruction or decay of the disciplinary frames of artistic research can be viewed as the pre-conditions for it entering another level: Establishing a new and independent understanding of artistic research. In the last two decades the infancy of artistic research has been accompanied by a set of disciplinary measures according to Michel Foucault. PhD candidates were trained in developing research questions, applying methods, writing creatively and formulating results. Scholarly points of reference – from ANT to OOO – were identified and appropriated, whereas we neglected to place artistic research on its own two feet. The designation of artistic research as “artistic” and “research” creates an attractive area of conflict, but it may also prevent an open exploration of this practice, which holds great potential in itself. Instead of creating a keener concept of artistic research we seek to shift the perspective and will refer to the preconditions for the artistic, based on the capacity of “aesthesis” as a capacity to gain knowledge by using the senses and transforming that knowledge it into specific actions or objects. The following pages grasp “dialogue” as a basic form of aesthetic practice. To elaborate this, we imagine the following dialogue based on a famous historical dialogue. The historical dialogue in particular, demonstrates the animation of dead matter by speculatively digesting it and destroying the authority of art.

JW: This dialogue is fictional in nature. It is essentially only real in the form of the dialogue written down here, as a text.

NvdM: It is the result of multiple stages of being written over and of digression in different directions. It is an intermedia palimpsest. Its starting point was a lecture performance on the occasion of our newly-founded Institute of Aesthetic Practice and Theory at Basel’s Academy of Art and Design in November 2013 and specifies an attempt to develop a new concept of aesthetic practice in the framework of a lecture.

JW: This first lecture performance in Basel (which was followed by a second in Hildesheim and a third in Turin) took place in three synchronized spaces, whereby the main hall featured three projection screens behind a stage with two chairs and the two ancillary rooms, both equipped with cameras, had direct feeds from the main hall.

NvdM: With a view to the past lecture performance, the structure you have just described is something we grasp less as a practice of staging, setting, creating a backdrop or accessories. Rather, it laid the basis for the very nature of the performance, which explored a new concept of aesthetic practice in the form of a

dialogue between you and me, between the media and the lecturers, between the spaces and the actions conducted in them (e.g., the mixing of plaster and humus).

JW: ... And – or so I would like to add – construes dialogue between speakers, media, spaces, practices and their respective interlocking as a way of opening up traditional dialogic structures. Let us start with a brief dialogue on dialogue. And not just about our dialogue during the 2013 lecture performance and its expansion on the occasion of the conference on “Aesthetic Practice. The self-transgression of the arts or the transgression of art?” in June 2014 at University of Hildesheim, but let us also talk about dialogue as aesthetic practice, how you did it on the 2018 Artistic Research Conference in Plymouth, as a practice of forming knowledge and critique.

NvdM: The traditional form of the literary dialogue which emerged as an influential genre with Platonic dialectics, has a question/answer or vehicle/motor structure, with one of the two participants in the dialogue, e.g., in the role of Socrates, acting as the motor driving the discussion. The key characteristics of a Platonic dialogue are the focus on knowledge and reaching a goal. Hans-Georg Gadamer expanded the notion of the Platonic Dialogue to include the importance of recognizing the “You” in the development of a shared horizon of meaning and consensus. But you will have noticed that in dialogue we usually speak of “we”? To a certain extent, Gadamer’s horizon of meaning does not fall between us, meaning between the “I” and the “You”, but *in front of* a “We”. We construct the horizon of meaning as the result of a dialogue before us and then constantly advance it.²

JW: We find that for various reasons the Platonic and the hermeneutic concept of a dialogue is too constrained. Our interest is in a dialogue that not only addresses aesthetic practice but itself bears traits thereof. To put it differently, we are interested in the auto-performativity of the dialogue: Here, the focus must first be to recognize the simultaneity of theatricality and authenticity innate in all dialogue, particular those of a literary nature and not to simply disguise the fact. We will be talking about Diderot later on: Günther Heeg used Diderot’s “Paradox on the Actor” to show how the actor’s perfect control of his affects is a method to restore the rhetorical nature of acted representation in order to help

² See Hans-Georg Gadamer: *Truth and Method*, (Sheed & Ward: London, 1975), pp. 325–44; Hans-Georg Gadamer: “Vom Zirkel des Verstehens,” (1959), in his: *Wahrheit und Methode. Ergänzungen, Register*, (Tübingen, 1986), pp. 57–65; Hans-Georg Gadamer: *Wer bin ich, wer bist Du? Ein Kommentar zu Paul Celans Gedichtfolge Atemkristall*, (Frankfurt/Main, 1973).

create the illusion of authenticity.³ Our dialogue is also subject to the same paradox. We exaggerate reconstructing the rhetorical nature of the dialogue in order to enable “authentic discussion”.

NvdM: Meaning that, by resorting to rhetorical figures, traditional formats and “framings”, we seek to tap productively into the valid staged character of dialogues. Thanks to it, the spontaneous idea is as it were supported and secure by a role play, as the spontaneous idea occurs in a framing defined for it and can develop in a completely different way.

JW: ...Just as a mountain climber secures his next move in uncertain terrain using carabiners, hooks, ropes and loops, in our case the spontaneous idea is transposed from the format of the dialogue onto the stage.

NvdM: There is a second reason why for our concept of dialogue as aesthetic practice the Platonic and the hermeneutic notions of dialogue are too confining. For they concede hardly any space to aesthetic action and instead prioritize conceptual theorization!

JW: And, in this context, the aesthetic object, either as raw material, a thing, a design object or an artwork, merely an intellectual notion, not an actor in the dialogue.

NvdM: The medieval philosopher Nicolas of Cusa pointed in an interesting, but different direction: In his dialogue *De ludo globi* (1462/63) the dialogue hinges on a game that approximates the game of boule but is played with hollow spheres that have been cut in half. It is as if one were watching the partners in dialogue playing it, although the metaphorical character of the game as movement toward knowledge is resurrected at the end of the dialogue.⁴

JW: And the way you describe it, the aesthetic objects remain the means whereby the players express themselves, i.e. ensnared in their being as pieces in a game. Bruno Latour and also the speculative Realists have shown us another way of approaching things. To put it in a nutshell, this involves considering objects and things as actors equal to the human actors in the processes of knowledge

³ Cf. Günther Heeg: *Das Phantasma der natürlichen Gestalt. Körper, Sprache und Bild im Theater des 18. Jahrhunderts*, (Frankfurt/Main & Basel, 2000); Johannes Friedrich Lehmann: *Der Blick durch die Wand. Zur Geschichte des Theaterzuschauers und des Visuellen bei Diderot und Lessing*, (Freiburg/Breisgau, 2000, being Rombach Wissenschaften: Reihe Cultura; vol. 12).

⁴ Nicolas of Cusa: “Dialogus de ludo Globi”, in: his: *Metaphysical Speculations*, vol. 2, tr. J. Hopkins, (Minneapolis: Arthur J. Banning, 2000).

formation.⁵ We believe the recognition of materials and objects as actors of an equal status is central for aesthetic practices and artistic research that focus on creating the new through the interaction with materials and objects (including new knowledge).

NvdM: What does knowledge and knowledge formation mean here? If, in line with our understanding of the aesthetic practice we support conceptual work between human actors with something different, namely objects and materials and the various techniques for transforming and producing them, then a different concept of knowledge emerges; and a different concept of cognition that to a certain extent relativizes the notion of conceptual work and questions it through the aesthetic practices of transformation and production in dialogue. Dialog enables things to explicitly take the stage as actors within the process of knowledge formation.

JW: According to our understanding of knowledge and the related recognition of things as actors, we need in part to go back before Kant, who as we all know assumed that we can only see things the way they can be seen from the perspective of human cognition. Which means, however, as Steven Shaviro recently put it, in the final instance only to talk about and to ourselves.⁶

NvdM: This is what speculative realism can contribute to the matter at hand: It insists on the independence of things vis-à-vis our conceptualizations of them. The objects and things already exist before we analyze, systematize and interpret them. Speculation refers in this context to the potential ability to go beyond the limits of knowledge.⁷ To refer to Nicolas of Cusa again: For him, the speculative figure of cognition was the only way of going beyond human finitude. In my view artistic research as a way of understanding the world differently goes a similar way.

JW: We discern in dialogue with (and through) media, objects, materials and also aesthetic speculation potentially at work, which is interesting as it is based on the senses and down to earth.

⁵ Bruno Latour: *Reassembling the Social. An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 2005).

⁶ Steven Shaviro: *The Universe of Things. On Speculative Realism*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

⁷ Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek & Graham Harman: "Towards a Speculative Philosophy," in: there: *The Speculative Turn*, (Melbourne: Re.Press, 2011), pp. 4–7.

NvdM: One could paraphrase Armen Avanesian here and say: Aesthetic practice refers to making something by transgressing the boundary between non-being and being and between being and potentiality.⁸

JW: Iain Hamilton Grant describes at one point his career from art to philosophy: En route by bus from London to Edinburgh he finds himself watching the rain drops on the window and how the street lights behind become diffuse, more intense and blur. He says his impression was a Kandinsky or Malevich painting translated into the fourth dimension. And the observation entailed, and he points it up as persuading him to turn to philosophy, is: Abstraction and observation are not opposites. They are identical.⁹

NvdM: This view concurs with our own. It says that in actual aesthetic practice knowledge can arise that does not require abstraction in order to offer cognitive potential. What would really interest me, however, is how this insight as regards observation or making can be given a new position in the scheme of things.

JW: In this context, to duck your question, what surprises me is Grant's biographical progression from art to philosophy, from working with objects to working with concepts; just as overall the speculative Realists cannot sidestep the paradox that they can only ever elaborate conceptually on their object focus ...

NvdM: ...meaning they cannot actually grasp the objects or have them function as actors. In short, accepting the things as participants in philosophical practice. Our concept of aesthetic practice, by contrast, is intended to support reflective thought by aesthetic action. We do not (or not only) think about, but with objects.

JW: These artistic and creative practices put reflective thought to the test. For this reason, we wrote at one point: Aesthetic practice the way we see it does not systematize or judge things, it tests the categories for evaluating them. To this end we need a different model of thought, namely that of critique. But more on that later.

NvdM: At any rate, within this model of thought dialogue anchors aesthetic practice in thought. Speaking takes place, as you just described, between theatricality and authenticity, and this breaks open hermetic concepts of

⁸ Armen Avanesian: "Das spekulative Ende des ästhetischen Regimes," in: *Texte zur Kunst* 24/93 (2014), pp. 53–63, p. 59: "Poetics [...] refers to making something by transgressing the boundary between non-being and being."

⁹ <http://afterxnature.blogspot.ch/2013/04/iain-hamilton-grant-interview-with.html>, last retrieved Oct. 9, 2015.

authorship. It enables us to think about the integration of aesthetic practice. In dialogue, we distribute thinking and speaking across different voices as it were. We take thinking apart, we unravel it.

JW: When searching for models of the dialogic of relevance to us we came across the dialogues between Denis Diderot and Jean Le Rond d'Alembert, if only because they contain an interesting theory of the imagination.¹⁰ Diderot and d'Alembert published the renowned "Encyclopédie" in the second half of the 18th century and in that major intellectual undertaking transposed the knowledge of the day into a lexical and aesthetic agenda. The tree of knowledge that forms the frontispiece of the "Encyclopedia" refers to the organic and empirical character of the genesis of human knowledge and assumes a coherent knowledge system can be created [ill. 2]. Diderot and his colleagues went into the studios of craftsmen and artists to investigate their manual and technical practices.

NvdM: Moreover, in a fictitious dialogue between himself and d'Alembert Diderot explored the limits of that knowledge system and also transgressed beyond them. The *Entretien entre d'Alembert et Diderot* is the first part of a trilogy written in the late summer of 1769, the second part of which is the so-called *Rêve de D'Alembert*, and the third concluding section is *La suite d'un entretien entre M. d'Alembert et M. Diderot*. In line with the speculative nature of dialogue and the theme discussed in it, the first section, i.e., the *Entretien*, already has the feel of a reverie about it, as it were the prelude to what then follows.¹¹

JW: That reminds me of the famous sentence in Francisco de Goya's *Caprichos*, made in 1797–9 and published in 1799. Capricho 43 reads: *El sueño de la razón produce monstruos* – *The Sleep of reason Produces Monsters*, whereby the word *sueño* can be translated as "sleep" or as "dream". Meaning it could read *The dream that Produces the Absence of Reason* ... no monsters in our context, only an imagination. This intonation is intimated in the *Entretien*: How does Reason think when it starts

¹⁰ Denis Diderot, *Conversation between D'Alembert and Diderot* (1769). from *Diderot, Interpreter of Nature*, translated by Jean Stewart and Jonathan Kemp, (International Publishers, 1943).

¹¹ Cf. Rudolf Behrens: "Dialogische Einbildungskraft. Zu einer auseinandergesetzten Theorie der Imagination in Diderots *Rêve de D'Alembert*," in: Gabriele Vickermann-Ribémont & Dietmar Rieger (eds.): *Dialog und Dialogizität im Zeichen der Aufklärung*, (Tübingen 2003,) p. 125–58, here pp. 127f.: "In this context, there is some consensus among scholars that thanks to its hypothetical and illocutionary free-floating status the dream-like speech by d'Alembert that arises from its reworking of the theorems stated by Diderot in the first Dialogue unleashes a range of possible responses that the two listening and/or respectively differently 'translating' partners in dialog [...] then develop in an interruptive second dialog."

as a dialogic reverie? The very dialogical nature shows that you repeatedly step out of the dream.¹²

NvdM: Perhaps we can say: In the dream of reason, ontology is prioritized over epistemology, and we can from here develop different cognitive models that we have only very coarsely outlined with the terms imagination and speculation. I feel it important that the dream-like, to the extent that it can be advocated as the basis for the *Entretien*, does not define thinking *beyond* Reason, but instead opens up a space where rational thought can be interwoven with imaginations and speculations. We are interested in the dialogue between Diderot and d'Alembert because the dialogic structure incorporates the aesthetic object and speculation to develop new categories of critique. Perhaps this offers an alternative to an epistemic practice based on the empirical. The dialogue of Diderot and d'Alembert, or so it seems, articulates an epistemic practice that itself tests the conditions under which cognition is valid and to this end resorts to techniques such as digression, speculation and object references.

JW: So what is interesting for us about dialogue is the debate it allows between subjects, objects and their media. The topic of the *Entretien*, the question as to the sensitivity and thus vibrancy of material, is addressed at the meta-reflective level, as material is itself part of the dialogue and presents itself there as possessing sense, as it were.

NvdM: Incorporation, and the related topic of animation will be one theme in the following dialogue. It may be strange to digest a fictitious dialogue through a fictitious dialogue, as the act of incorporation, of digesting, is itself a topic in the dialogue that now follows.

JW: And that is why we will now read a short piece from the first section of the *Entretien*. We will not stage or *reenact* the dialogue between Diderot and d'Alembert. No props, no costumes, but we appropriate it by incorporating it into our dialogue. The dialogue becomes a partner in the dialogue. And we have the material discussed in the dialogue take the stage as an actor:

¹² Peter André Alt: *Der Schlaf der Vernunft. Literatur und Traum in der Kulturgeschichte der Neuzeit*, (Munich, 2002), p. 155: "In a letter to Sophie Volland Diderot noted on September 11, 1769 that he used the medium of a dream to present thoughts that would be declared mad in the context of a normal philosophical dialog. [...] The particular originality of the dream Diderot tells it not at all its absurd logic, but rather the tension ha succeeds in creating between theory and literature, systemic thrust and fantasy, reflection and passion."

NvdM: *D'Alembert: I'd like you to tell me what difference there is, according to you, between a man and a statue, between marble and flesh.*

JW: *Diderot: Not much. Flesh can be made from marble, and marble from flesh.*

NvdM: *D'Alembert: But one is not the other.*

[...]

JW: *Diderot: Precisely; just as you say.*

NvdM: *D'Alembert: So, then, the statue merely has inactive sensitiveness; and man, animals, perhaps even plants, are endowed with active sensitiveness.*

JW: *Diderot: There is undoubtedly that difference between the marble block and living tissue; but you can well imagine that's not the only one.*

NvdM: *D'Alembert: Of course. Whatever likeness there may be in outward form between a man and a statue, there is no similarity in their internal organization. The chisel of the cleverest sculptor cannot make even an epidermis. But there is a very simple way of transforming an inanimate force into an animate one the experiment is repeated a hundred times a day before our eyes; whereas I don't quite see how a body can be made to pass from the state of inactive to that of active sensitiveness.*

JW: *Diderot: Because you don't want to see it. It is just as common a phenomenon.*

NvdM: *D'Alembert: And what is this common phenomenon, if you please?*

JW: *Diderot: I'll tell you, since you want to be put to shame; it occurs every time you eat.*

NvdM: *D'Alembert: Every time I eat!*

JW: *Diderot: Yes, for what do you do when you eat? You remove obstacles that prevented the food from possessing active sensitiveness. You assimilate it, you turn it into flesh, you make it animal, you give it the faculty of sensation; and, what you do to this foodstuff, I can do, when I please, to marble.*

NvdM: *D'Alembert: And how?*

JW: *Diderot: How? I shall make it edible.*

NvdM: *D'Alembert: Make marble edible? That doesn't seem easy to me.*

JW: *Diderot: It's my business to show you the process. I take the statue you see there, I put it in a mortar, then with great blows from a pestle ... – Here, and I permit me to interrupt at this juncture, is where the famous though experiment begins, which is inserted into the dialogue qua “digression”. Digression (see the Essay by Aurel Sieber) is an important topic for Diderot and d'Alembert. Jean Starobinski terms Diderot's*

digressions as *causeries*; they are minor improvisations that characterize Diderot's rhetoric. He simply digresses.¹³ Sometimes you get the feeling he has lost his thread, but then at the right moment he is back on target. It seems to us that the significance of the digression is more than rhetorical device. After all, it is precisely digressive thought that lays the foundations for scattered thoughts and their experimental character.

NvdM: *D'Alembert: Careful, please; that's Falconet's masterpiece! [...]* Nothing makes it seem imperative that to prove the sensitivity of material marble be chosen as the material. However, it enables Diderot to transpose the subject into the discourse on aesthetics: He takes a marble statue by the at that time renowned sculptor Étienne-Maurice Falconet (1716–1791) and starts breaking it to pieces. In 1763, meaning some six years prior to the penning of the *Entretien*, Falconet's statue of *Pygmalion et Galatée*, which is now housed in the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, first went on show in the Paris Salon. In 1766, Catharine II appointed to Falconet to the Court of St. Petersburg. Between 1765 and 1773 Diderot and Falconet corresponded; the letters were later published as *Dispute sur la postérité*. In a nutshell, the correspondence outlines two divergent views of the relationship of making an artwork to posterity. While for Diderot the work can in the act of production intend recognition in posterity and cannot be created without that imagination, Falconet's artist only creates the artwork for himself. That artist is content with the pure reference to the material and the creative act of the work *in statu nascendi*. For Falconet, anything that goes further, recognition or rejection by posterity, is of no relevance.¹⁴ To this extent, there are multiple layers of irony in Diderot's imaginary destruction of a marble statue by Falconet. Diderot, the advocate of the posterity hypothesis, proves to Falconet that solely working on the material does not suffice to form the representative character of the artwork. Even if only implicitly, the correspondence between Falconet and Diderot is inserted into the dialogue between Diderot and D'Alembert in a similar manner to the way the latter dialogue is inserted into the present one, so let us continue:

JW: *Diderot: Falconet won't mind; the statue is paid for, and Falconet cares little for present respect and not at all for that of posterity.*

NvdM: *D'Alembert: Go on then, crush it to powder!* Wonderful! Six years before the

¹³ Jean Starobinski, *Diderot, un diable de ramage*, (Paris, 2012).

¹⁴ Cf. Marc Buffat: "Diderot, Falconet et l'Amour de la postérité," in: *Recherches sur Diderot et sur L'Encyclopédie*, 43 (2005), <https://rde.revues.org/3452>, last retrieved Oct. 13, 2015.

dialogue was written, Diderot praised in his Salon critique from 1763 the mentioned masterpiece of Falconet. Now in his speculative dialogue, Diderot destroys the sculpture and imaginatively mixes powdered marble and humus. Impossible to say whether he analyzes or synthesizes, instead Diderot focuses on re-organizing the material in a procedure that is both scientific and aesthetic. The development of a deconstructed sculpture out of a masterpiece could be described as an act of estrangement (see the contribution of Silvia Henke) to access another way of thinking, an aesthetic thinking. We interpret this speculative act also as an aesthetic practice and take it further: We have powdered marble and humus mix and then blend these into our dialogue as a mere thought game, as an object performance or intermedia projection [ill. 3].

JW: *Diderot: When the block of marble is reduced to impalpable powder, I mix it with humus or leaf mold; I knead them well together; I water the mixture, I let it decompose for a year or two or a hundred, time doesn't matter to me. When the whole has turned into a more or less homogeneous substance, into humus, do you know what I do?*

NvdM: *D'Alembert: I'm sure you don't eat humus.*

JW: *Diderot: No; but there is a means of connection, of assimilation, a link, between the humus and myself, a latus as the chemist would say.*

NvdM: *D'Alembert: And that is plant life?*

JW: *Diderot: Quite right. I sow peas, beans, cabbages, and other vegetables; these plants feed on the soil and I feed on the plants.* Diderot presents the transformation of matter using an object that itself bears metamorphosis within it as an object, namely the myth of Pygmalion.

NvdM: *D'Alembert: Whether it's true or false, I like this passage from marble into humus, from humus to the vegetable kingdom, from the vegetable to the animal kingdom, to flesh.* What we have here is the Pygmalion myth being spun out further ad infinitum in a complex vein that amusingly ends in the subject itself. According to Ovid, Pygmalion transforms his desire into a female ivory statue that comes to life. Falconet transforms this into marble which itself already constitutes a geological metamorphosis of pressure, heat and limestone. Diderot pulverizes the statue, turns it into earth, into a plant and into flesh. The recourse to Pygmalion enables the speculative proof of the sensitivity of matter. What is staged as a chemical process is actually an aesthetic one.¹⁵ One or two hundred years makes no difference.

JW: Roland Barthes plays through the reciprocal series through a reading of

¹⁵ Ovid: *Metamorphoses*, Book X, Verses 243–99. Inka Müller-Bach: *Im Zeichen Pygmalions. Das Modell der Statue und die Entdeckung der Darstellung im 18. Jahrhundert*, (Munich, 1998).

Balzac's *Sarrasine* (1830): In love, the artist Sarrasine creates a statue of singer Zambinella, who turns out to be a castrato. The sculpture, which Balzac describes as a statue of Pygmalion, thus becomes a deception as the semiotic link to the referent is fragile. Cardinal de Cocognara later has a marble statue of a woman made modelled on the statue. Based on the Cocognara statue, artist Joseph Marie Vien then paints a picture of Adonis, for whom Balzac uses Anne Louis Girodet's *Endymion* (1788) as the model.¹⁶ And I read on: *Diderot: So, then, I make flesh, or soul as my daughter said, an actively sensitive substance and if I do not thus solve the problem you set me, at any rate I get pretty near solving it; for you will admit that a piece of marble is much further removed from a being that can feel, than a being that can feel is from a being that can think.*

NvdM: *D'Alembert: I agree.* ¹⁷

JW: So much on the dialogue that could form an important launch pad for a concept of aesthetic practice as dialogue. In recent years, the concept of aesthetic practice has been used as a way of examining the joint premises of art and design as regards the processes of creating and making them, their respective knowledge cultures and their social relevance. The Hildesheim conference on "Aesthetic Practice" and the Plymouth conference on Artistic Research, the self-transgression of the arts and self-digestion of artistic research, which form the basis of this dialogue, reflects these more recent debates and assesses their implication for social theory and aesthetics. The dialogue between Diderot and D'Alembert not only addresses the core of the notion of self-digestion in artistic research as a productive speculation, but tackles also the issue at hand in a twofold sense.

NvdM: Well put! You evidently mean that "the de-artification of art" is likewise performed as the act of pulverizing a sculpture?

JW: And thereupon as transformation into an aesthetic practice of the dialogic. Digression, the thought game of destroying Falconet's statue, is in the final process

¹⁶ Roland Barthes: *S/Z* [1970], tr. Richard Miller, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974), pp. 114-5, summarizes: „The Zambinellian body is a real body; but this real body is total (glorious, miraculous) only insofar as it descends from a body already written by statuary (Ancient Greece, Pygmalion); it too ... is a replica, issuing from a code. This code is infinite since it is written. [...] This grounding, this stoppage, this jamming of the Code, is the *masterpiece* (...) To discover La Zambinella's body is therefore to put an end to the infinity of the codes, to find at last the origin (the original) of the copies."

¹⁷ Denis Diderot, *Conversation between D'Alembert and Diderot* (1769). from *Diderot, Interpreter of Nature*, translated by Jean Stewart and Jonathan Kemp, (International Publishers, 1943).

a matter of digestion.

NvdM: The physiological transformation of matter as digestion can be reflected in a process prior to it, namely that of cooking. Diderot hardly mentions this in the dialogue, while it definitely plays a role in the *Encyclopédie* as “cuisine” and “bouillir”. Michael Pollan with reference has asserted that cooking is the key element of sociality. Anthropologist Wrangham, for his part, and borrowing from Claude Levi-Strauss suggests that it was the invention of cooking and not the production of tools or the development of language that made us human. Cooking, as it were, assumes part of our digestion for us and enables nutrition and energy to be used more efficiently and not to degrade as much.¹⁸

JW: Which is why we say that “cooking” can itself be termed an aesthetic practice in which techniques of production under the considerable influence of a knowledge of the materials allow a transformation and re-organization of material. In keeping with the speculative Realists, John Cochran comments: “[...] *cooking requires a concept of food in which food is not only an object for us – whether inflated to higher ideals or considered in terms of immediate sense perceptions – but also an object in itself with capacities and tendencies undiscovered.*”¹⁹ This is exactly what we initially meant with the idea of recognizing things as actors. Aesthetic practice, so we believe, is to be located in the dialogue of subject actors and object actors. The concept of cooking is of course defined too narrowly by both Wrangham and Levi-Strauss if one considers all the techniques of cooking that have become relevant again today, such as air drying, fermenting, smoking, pickling, preserving, etc.

NvdM: We believe it important to note the current convergence of artistic/creative actions and culinary practice. Cooks adopts the staging practices of artists, just as artists articulate themselves through temporary restaurants, food labs, street food, and cooking performances. We have termed this elsewhere a “culinary turn”; the flipside of the strong attention toward questions of cooking

¹⁸ Michael Pollan: *Cooked: A Natural History of Transformation*, (NY: Penguin, 2013); Richard Wrangham: *Catching Fire. How Cooking Made Us Human*, (New York: Basic Books, 2009); Claude Levi-Strauss: *The Raw and the Cooked. Introduction to a Science of Mythology* [1964], (London: Pimlico, 1969).

¹⁹ John Cochran: “Object Oriented Cooking,” in: *Collapse*, VII (2012), pp. 299-330.

and nutrition expressed here is the diagnosis of a “crisis of eating”.²⁰

JW: To bring our digression on cooking to a close here: We have for some time now working with avant-garde chef Stefan Wiesner. He is a champion of a heterogeneous movement that taste critic Jürgen Dollase has tried to embrace with the notion of Nova Regio cuisine.²¹ The shared interest is not just in a cuisine geared to regional and seasonal ingredients, but also to the experimental discovery of new tastes and ways of including nature. In jointly held cooking performances, Stefan Wiesner presents how stones, wood, nails, bark and earth can be transformed into edible tastes [ill. 4]. The recognition of matter as an actor becomes legible precisely in its recalcitrance here. We believe that it may be possible to analyze urban spaces and countryside by cooking as it were. If we describe this in the lineage of Diderot and d'Alembert as an aesthetic practice, then in this context we do indeed have to do with a transgressive phenomenon.

NvdM: At the latest since Richard Wagner's intermedia postulate of a *gesamtkunstwerk*, “transgression” has emerged as the key sign of Modernism.²² Transgression of the arts is not new per se. What is new is that aesthetic practices assert their equal status as a mode of knowledge culture compared to the epistemic and this also points to a shift in the concept of knowledge. The key technique of this practice would seem to be the speculative transformation and reorganization of material, but also of social states and conditions in order to create, how shall I put it?, counterfactual difference.

JW: This difference now becomes tangible as a practice of critique. Christoph Menke suggests that aesthetic practice can be termed a formative practice of judgment that always also judges itself and recognizes that the judgment is only ever temporary. Put differently, it involves a judgment that construes itself not as definitive cognition but as a process that has to do with aesthetic formation and the perception of it.²³

²⁰ See D. Kimmich, D. & Sch. Schahadat: *Essen*, Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaft 1 (2012), Bielefeld, p. 7. Nicolaj van der Meulen & Jörg Wiesel (eds.): *Culinary Turn. Ästhetische Praxis des Kochens*, (Bielefeld, 2015).

²¹ Cf. Jürgen Dollase: *Himmel und Erde. In der Küche eines Restaurantkritikers*, (Munich & Aarau, 2014).

²² See Richard Wagner: “The Art-Work of the Future,” in: *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, vol. 1, pp. 69-213, tr. William Ashton Ellis, (1895).

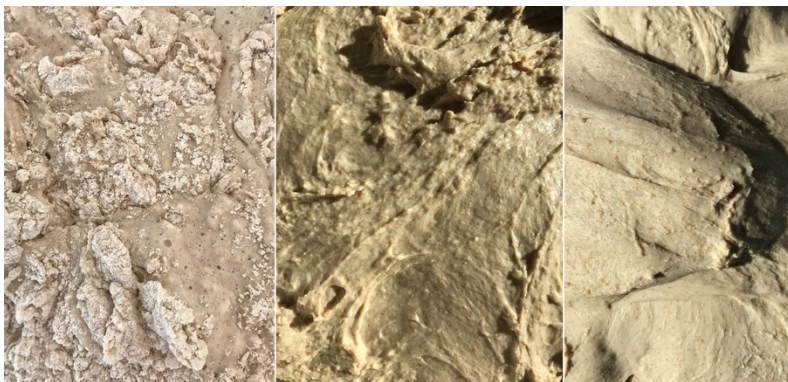
²³ Christoph Menke: *The Power of Judgment*, (Berlin, 2010).

NvdM: To paraphrase Judith Butler, aesthetic practice can be construed as a critique that actually does not judge but in the critique suspends judgment.²⁴ Instead of judging, the critique suspends the judgment and in this suspended judgment does not return to the judgment (of another), but instead initiates a new practice. If one thinks among others of Rogoff's superb differentiation of the concept of "criticality", then, or so we would suggest, we can discern a *shift* in the aesthetic from a "knowledge" to a "discourse of critique" (see also the contribution of Henryetta Dürschlag).²⁵

JW: What Diderot performs, and I'd like to re-emphasize this, is only possible as an aesthetic practice, not as a mathematical or scientific experiment.

NvdM: The ostensible destruction of the aesthetic is merely rhetoric for an all the more effective re-appearance as aesthetic practice.

Illustrations:



Ill. 1: Three stages of autolysis in bread baking .

²⁴ Judith Butler, "What is Critique? An Essay on Foucault's Virtue," in: David Ingram, ed., *The Political: Readings in Continental Philosophy*, (London: Basil Blackwell, 2002).

²⁵ Irit Rogoff: *Smuggling – An Embodied Criticality*, in: <http://cipcp.net/dlfiles/rogoff-smuggling> (2006), last retrieved Oct. 14, 21015.



Ill. 2: *Tree of knowledge* or *Système figuratif représentant l'embranchement des connaissances humaines*, ex: Denis Diderot et Jean Le Rond d'Alembert: *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, Paris 1751-1772.



Ill 3: *Etienne-Maurice Falconet (1716-1791): Pygmalion und Galatea, 1763 Hermitage, St. Petersburg and Marble Powder, intermedial lecture performance, Basel, November 2013. (NvdM)*



Ill4: Stefan Wiesner: Brother Klaus-Soup, Ingredients: Water, branches of fir, stones, stone wedge, brooke kress, 2014. (NvdM)

HOW TO BECOME STRANGE. BETWEEN AESTHETIC EDUCATION AND AESTHETIC RESEARCH

By Silvia Henke

Abstract

Rather than sharpen the definition of the term ‘artistic research’ with or in difference to scientific knowledge production or processes of experimentation – the panel of the Swiss Sinergia group ‘Practices of Aesthetic Thinking’ (<https://sinergia-pat.ch/>) aims to shift the perspective from concepts of research to a preliminary question: In which sense can art in itself be described as a unique way (rather than a method) of thinking, of critique and of practices of (un)learning and (non)comprehension? In relation to aesthetic education as field of artistic research, this paper goes back to the work of Bertolt Brecht by focusing on the *learning play* as a mode of aesthetico-practical reflexivity. Doing so, it emphasizes the most interesting pedagogic and aesthetic figure in Brecht’s work – the *gesture*. Most interesting, because the gesture is practice and theory, body and mind, movement and language, emotion and intellect. It comes out of a theory and of a technique of the play – and it will be considered as a way of understanding in art and in aesthetic education in general. In its didactical ambiguity and by the reflexive potential of the *estrangement* it could also give impulses to the question, *how* artistic research could be shown or written as mode of self-reflexivity and aesthetic thinking.

‘Food comes first, then comes morality!’ (Mackie Messer, in: Bertolt Brecht, *Three penny opera*, 1928)

For Bertolt Brecht, it was always evident that art is a way of teaching – and therefore a way of learning. Not only in what he called the *learning play* but also in his poems and operas and in his collection of war photographs that ended up in a ‘warfibula’: in each part of his works there was a strong will to instruct, to show,

to teach – to open up the eyes for an understanding of the structures of power¹. He never asked whether his writing was really theory or practice. But: he was always interested in knowing whether that, what he called the ‘learning play’, is a form of rehearsal, of art – or of science and therefore also research: ‘Die Lehrstücke sind nicht lediglich Parabeln, die eine aphoristische Moral mit Zeigebildern ausstatten. Sie untersuchen auch.’ (Brecht, GBA 22: 111)

This statement can be seen as a summary of Brecht’s big task to bring very different genres and modes together: Parable, aphorism, morality, graph, and, as a summary: investigation or research (‘sie untersuchen auch’). Brecht was quite aware that this bringing together of various functions and modes in one genre couldn’t solve the question of the exact *differences* between these genres completely. In his writings of the years 1935-1937 he came back again and again in his ‘Writings’ to the question not *whether* the learning play should be a way of teaching, but *how* (e.g. GBA 22:117f.)

Using the dramatical epistemes of Brecht as a foil for a research project in order to explore the specific “percepts” in art, means therefore to take art not only as a way of thinking but also as a way of teaching. So I will examine in this paper three aesthetico-practical ways of teaching that come out of Brecht’s pedagogical aesthetics. I will raise three questions: *What* should be taught? *To whom* should it be taught? And finally, in a short example, *how* does art teach?

1. Teaching what?

“*Food comes first, then comes morality!*” If we listen to Meckie Messer in the famous Three-Penny-Opera (BFA 2: 284), the message seems to be clear! Enough food for everyone would be the basis for socialism, of course. But is it that simple? Hunger in itself is developed in Brecht’s theater plays in many ways and you couldn’t say that it always works in the same direction – towards the idealism of those who have had enough. In the contrary: Hunger is an ambivalent engine, because it always touches something else than food. It touches drives, it touches needs, it touches lust, it touches greed. ‘But still something is missing’! Paul Ackermann says repeatedly in *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* (BFA 2, 352 et passim). Let’s take his stereotypic answer as a leading figure against the roundness of Meckie Messer’s message and its morality. What if hunger or appetite, against all pretensions of the political logic, is a much more interesting way of showing conflicts than the fulfillment of basic needs? Jack, the glutton (Vielfress) in *Mahagonny* eats himself to death. ‘Everything is only half, I would like to eat myself!’ (BFA 3, 362)

¹ Look therefore e.g. at: Georges Didi Huberman (2009) where he analyzes Brecht’s use of photographs in his *Kriegsfibel* of the years 1939-1944, Brecht, B. (2008).



The compulsory (Students working place in art and education, University of Applied Sciences and Arts Lucerne) © Charles Moser 2015

So the simple message: ‘food comes first, then comes morality!’ turns into something ambiguous – and reveals a force that Brecht did not speak out. But he has *shown* it in his dramas in many ways and figures. I will call it here the force of the unsatisfiable (*des Unstillbaren*) – which belongs to learning and also to living. It can drive you mad, drive you sad, make you laugh, but still it works. Because hunger always turns out to be more ambivalent than political theory has sought it out. My first point therefore is: When it comes to stage, to play, to the reality of the *scene*, the political message can’t stay the same. It can even turn around and open up another scene – Rainer Nägele calls it the *obscene* or just: The other scene of the scene – which is also the other scene of knowledge². It is something that acts *on* or *in* the subject that cannot be rationalized in a didactical sense.

2. Teaching whom?

It is not that Brecht did not think about the ambiguous effects of learning and teaching. But: Since his ideal students and pupils should be of course the workers,

² Rainer Nägele, by examining *Mahagonny*, relates in his concept of ‘the other scene’ therefore Brecht’s use of the mouth as image and metaphor with sexual drives in the play. Nägele, R. (2014) S. 40-45.

the beggars, the women, the thieves and all the non-educated people, he was scetching at first sight *easy* learning situations – as for instance in the famous ‘praise of learning’, sung by those who are learning (den ‘Lernenden’): „Study, man in exile! /Study, man in prison!/ Study, wife in your kitchen!/Study, old-age pensioner! /You must prepare to take command now/Locate yourself a school homeless folk! Go, search some knowledge, you who freeze!’ {...} (GBA 3: 290) But, just in the scene before, the Mother and the workers turn a learning situation around, by teaching their teacher what they *need* to learn: not the words ‘nest, fish, branch’, but the words ‘worker, class struggle, exploitation’. So the workers in this scene are breaking the teachers power do define what is ‘easy to learn’. They know themselves better what they want to know. Therefore this scene can be considered as an example of a new and critical pedagogy, as a model for a current politicization of education in postcolonial or postmigrant societies – for instance in the concepts of the Brazilian education theorist Paolo Freire, but also in the concept of Rancière’s “Ignorant Schoolmaster”, where the authorian distance between teacher and pupils is shortened and in consequence the pupils will surprise the teacher.³ Of course, the concept of an emancipative education can be followed back to Friedrich Schiller’s letters in his famous text *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen* – as a starting point of Aesthetic Education in the development of the human being as of mankind in general. Schiller’s concept of the ‘aesthetic mood’ where sensitivity and reason interact (Schiller: 83), allow to put the focus on the aesthetic as a way of thinking, doing and being touched. This helps to break away from a unilateral or rational concept of education and of art. Taking the aesthetics for serious in a didactical situation, leads first to the *dialectic* of learning situations – out of which Brecht conceived his pedagogic and as well composed his poems and scenes in order ‘to bring the dialectic to pleasure’ (GBA 21:397f.) which means: to an open dialectic that knows position and negation – but and not the elimination of the negation. (cf. Mayer 1971: 251). Wolf Biermann calls this dialectical method of learning by not-understanding “the Brechtian break” (Biermann 2016: 432). In the learning scene in “The mother” this ‘break’ therefore is not the turning around of the teacher-pupil-role, but in the end the effect, that through the words that are rejected – ‘nest, fish, branch’ – the workers learn to read and to write. But the aesthetic in the teaching-learning-situation is more than dialectic. Then: By doing justice to the interferences and ‘frayings’ and ‘frazzlings’ (‘Verfransungen’) of the art (Adorno 1967: 164), something ‘inconceivable’ interferes. When aesthetic comes in the role the teacher, it comes to a transition, to quote the art pedagogue Karl-Josef Pazzini: “Every Education is aesthetic, because it provokes transitions form

³ Cf. for example Nora Sternfeld who reads the scene in this context – in order to argue that a ‘decided perhaps’, in the curational field as in the classroom is more adequate to educational processes than a more glamorous ‘taking a stand’. Sternfeld, ‘Unglamourous tasks? What can Education learn from its political traditions?’ In: *e-flux Journal* 14 march 2010.

the sensual to the sense; but this sense is in the mean time excavated/ undermined by the sensual, the physical. Inconceivable!” (Pazzini 2016: 23) Taking *aesthetic thinking* as a force in situations of teaching /of education (by using the German term ‘Bildung’ that is emphasized for instance by Pazzini, we could come closer to this aesthetic force, of course), we can emancipate the learning play from polarizations between art and didactic as well as theory and practice. That means: the emancipative concept of the ignorant schoolmaster and self- learning student can’t be all, then the scene of learning is more complex in itself because it is based on art: parable, graphs, aphorism – all these modes of the aesthetic who are *modalities of showing* – insofar they are not based on dialogue, which is another base form of aesthetic thinking and learning.⁴

So, to come back to Brecht: If the aesthetic interferes with learning situations, it can’t serve to one aim, it can’t be simply calculated in it’s effects. Why not? Because, to quote Brecht, learning is an act of picking up by rejecting. It is an act of critique. (BFA 22, S. 487).⁵ Therefore the main question is not what to teach and to whom but: *how* to teach.



Teaching colours: The Shaman © Charles Moser 2015

⁴ Cf. the contribution of Nicolaj van der Meulen and Jörg Wiesel in this book.

⁵ For a precise understanding of *critique as a mode of aesthetic thinking* look at Henrietta Duerschlag’s paper in this book.

3. How to teach

‘It is now the question: *how* should be taught and learned?’ (Brecht GBA 22:118, transl. S.H.)

On the path of my conceptualization of aesthetic education, I come to a cold place somewhere in northern America, a very cold winter at the beginning of last century – to a famous scene in Charlie Chaplin’s “Goldrush”.



Goldrush: Charlie Chaplin cooking and eating up his boot (1925)

Chaplin liked this film a lot. In the year 1942 he even made a sound version out of it – and we can watch it today on youtube. He used a historical source for the movie: A brutal legend about the gold diggers in the Sierra Nevada at the end of 19th century, who were closed in by snow and who were eating all in order not to starve, shoes and even themselves. But Chaplin was not so much interested in the historical background, he was interested in a certain way of transition. Later in the movie, we see little breads dancing – like the feet of a ballerina. A close interest of Chaplin lies therefore in the transformation of food into something else, a specific physical dimension, where it loses its identity and gets strange.

Brecht discovered this scene while he was working on a specific aesthetic dimension by which he wanted to revolt the whole drama: we all know it by the effect of estrangement, in german ‘der Verfremdungseffekt’ or just: the V-Effect. His basic potential is, Brecht worked it out and out, that by estrangement we realize not only something new and unknown. Every teacher pretends to present something new to his pupils. No, it is more than something new. By estrangement, be it in a movie scene, a theatrical scene or a classroom scene, we experience *by non-evidence* something really basic in the already known. Quoting Brecht: ‘To say it in a short way, it is a technique by which the representative actions between men can be made more showy, more needy for explication and

more non-evident, non-natural. The aim of the effect is to enable the spectator to a productive critique from a social point of view.' (Brecht, *Die Strassenszene* 1940, GBA 22: 377, transl.: S.H.) 'More showy': Obviously the effect of estrangement is in principle a mode of showing; it is in the heart of Brecht's theory where it has a kind of epistemic importance: 'To estrange means to show! {...} The showing must be shown! {...} To estrange means to take a gesture and to make a question of knowledge out of it.' (Brecht, GBA 15:166, transl.: S.H.)

Brecht was always clear in what he called the intention of the V-Effect: to present an analyze of the social mechanisms *in* the actions and re-actions between men. But: He was not so clear in his writings about the aesthetic dimension of this V-Effect. Let's look again at the scene in *Goldrush*: What is the unknown, the non-evident in it? What happens to the boot by his estrangement to a thanks-giving-turkey or a chicken? Could we realize form a social point of view how all animals end up dead when it comes to men? How the rush for gold is punished as a useless search for welfare? Or could we realize, in an aesthetic way, that leather is a special stuff and that boots are built like little houses for our feet? Could we realize that a shoe - by it's metonymical force - is a piece of the body of his owner, a second skin? And if we do so, couldn't we suddenly see Chaplin eating up a piece of himself - and enjoying the moment of this autolysis! Couldn't we see Chaplin here as a teacher for the hungry gold digger, showing him how to eat a cooked shoe? And doing so, showing us that teaching sometimes eats up a part of ourselves? Chaplin's teaching method is showing, not explaining, not talking. We are in a silent movie. Nevertheless or even the more the scene becomes double or even completely open in it's didactical intention. There is one detail that becomes interesting in this search for the didactical, a detail, that tells us something about *how* Brecht looked at the scene. What interested him most, is a specific *gesture*. Brecht notes 1936: 'V-Effect with Chaplin: The Eating up of the boot - with morals of eating, putting the nail off as if it was the bone of a chicken, the *index finger* spread away.' (Brecht: GBA 22:223, transl. SH)

4. ... by a gesture: the index finger spread away...

When it comes to the *index finger* we are in the physical didactic in its purest sense. No wonder that Brecht took out this detail as the gesture for estrangement. Actually, if you look at the scene, it is not the index finger that Chaplin spreads away. He just uses the nail *like an index finger*. But exactly by pointing out this detail, we are in a completely multivalent situation: The index finger may be in the heart of the gesture, but what does it teach? Isn't it that Chaplin tells exactly by this gesture at least three stories in one? We can see a perversion of a wishbone in the nail, we can see an innocent way of bringing the estrangement to its playfulness, we can see a cruel humor or even sadism against the old thumb gold digger. The attention for the little gesture will be developed and theorized in Brecht's conception of an epic drama - until it becomes the heart of his theory of estrangement. The notion of gesture will become thereby at least double: on the one hand, the gesture is a physical aspect of a specific attention structure, mostly to point out a social relation. Therefore the gesture is a rhetorical force that

Brecht uses also for a poem, for an image or for a speech; it is a certain way of overdetermination (cf. Brecht GBA 12: 416f, GBA18:13).

It is Walter Benjamin who points out in his writings on Brecht the dialectic meaning of it; he calls the gesture even ‘the mother of dialectic’ (Benjamin, GS II.2: 530f.) It is the moment where the spectator or reader stops and amazes. To quote Benjamin: It is a ‘stagnation in the real stream of life’ (‘eine Stauung im realen Lebensfluss’, *ibid.*) Therefore – and I come to my conclusion – we learn by the gesture something about learning which is understanding by not-understanding. Brecht was forced to explain again and again what the actual difference between the learning play and a real scene in life was. ‘Wie steht es um den Kunstwert des epischen Theaters?’ he asked in his long explication about the basic model of the epic drama (GBA 22: 378). And he insists on the fact, that the V-Effect and in specially the gesture in its micro-practical nucleus has nothing to do with art, it is just a ‘little part of an action’ (‘ein kleiner Teilvorgang’, *ibid.*: 377), a detail, that makes something strange – be it in the classroom, on stage, or in the street⁶. The epic drama is a highly artificial matter, it needs artists, acrobatics, phantasy, compassion and humor. But the gesture is an aesthetic practice, a way of aesthetic thinking and teaching. The moment where things get unknown, unclear and ambiguous. This is more than knowing or realizing something from a social point of view. It is the potential that things, actions, structures could be comprehensible – but not yet understood. And this is where the lust to learn comes from.

Therefore the gesture in it’s double or dialectic sense could also be a way of aesthetic research in order to produce like the learning play knowledge that doesn’t become just ‘merchandise’, but shows also the ways of knowledge production in very singular and even amusing manners. (cf. Brecht 22: 111f.) It means also to agree that in every process of research and learning there is a lack of understanding that can’t be told but needs to be shown – by gestures, by digressions, or even by acrobatics⁷.

Bibliography

- Adorno, T. (1967) ”Kunst und die Künste”, in: *ibid.* *Ohne Leitbild. Parva Aesthetica*, Frankfurt/M, 158-182.
- Benjamin, W. (1991) ”Was ist das epische Theater?“, in: *ibid.* *Gesammelte Schriften* Bd. II, in: Rolf Tiedemann et al.(ed.), Frankfurt/M.
- Biermann, W. (2016) *Warte nicht auf bessere Zeiten! Die Autobiographie*, Berlin 2016.
- Brecht, B.(1998-2000) *Werke*. Grosse kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe, Werner Knecht et. al.(ed), Berlin/Weimar und Frankfurt/M.Brecht, B. (2008), *Kriegsfibel*, Ruth Berlau (ed.), Berlin.
- Didi Huberman, G. (2009): *Quand les images prennent position*, Paris.
- Dieterich, S., Furrer, W. (2018) ”Micropracticing the local. Localizing micropractice”, in: *Artistic Research. Being there. Explorations into the Local*, Luisa Greenfield, Myna Trustram,

⁶ For the term ‘micropractise’ in the context of art and research look at: Dieterich/Furrer 2018.

⁷ Cf. the contributions of Henryetta Duerschlag and Aurel Sieber in this book.

Edoardo Abrantes (ed.), NSU Press, 75-84.

Nägele, R. (2014) *Der andere Schauplatz*, Frankfurt/M. u. Basel.

Pazzini, KJ. (2015): *Bildung vor Bildern*, Bielefeld.

Rancière, J. (2009) *Der unwissende Lehrmeister. Fünf Lektionen über die intellektuelle Emanzipation*, Wien.

Schiller, F. (2009) *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen, in einer Reihe von Briefen*, Frankfurt/M. 2009.

Sternfeld, N. (2010) "Unglamorous tasks? What can Education learn from its political traditions?" In: *e-flux Journal* 14 march 2010.

VERACITY IN VORACITY: ON THE FUNCTION OF ESSAYISTIC PRACTICES IN ARTISTIC RESEARCH

Aurel Sieber

Abstract:

By embracing digression, the essay as a prominent mode of expression in artistic research promises a different kind of insight than classic discursive logic. Because digressions are by definition without method, it is notoriously difficult to analyze their function within a work of art. By looking at the short text 'Fresh Figs' by the essayist Walter Benjamin, I suggest that the digression of digestion triggers a veracity beyond propositional knowledge. This could serve as a means to sharpen the comprehension of the epistemic status of an essay's constellation: Rather than saying what it is about, it shows it; rather than articulating its findings with words, it relies on the critical judgement of the senses.

The Essay's epistemic procedure

As shown in Nicolaj van der Meulen's and Jörg Wiesel's essay on the dialogue as aesthetic practice, Diderot and d'Alembert use the rhetoric device of the literary digression to narrow in on their conclusion. The digression into the absurd scenario rendering a statue edible is telling and intriguing precisely because of its absurdity. Yet as readers, we hardly mind this extravagance. On the contrary, we embrace it for its originality, for its allegorical obscureness. It seems that within the confines of a digression, – which is marked as a sort of literary heterotopy – it is possible to let imagination roam a little more freely than scientific coherence would allow. By letting a straight line of reasoning become curved and meandering, new and unexpected insights can be had, poetic passages can catch the reader's attention and even the most difficult decisions can resolve themselves. In its endeavor to establish alternative epistemic practices to those known to the scientific community, artistic research is again and again confronted with the problem of an adequate expression. If it takes seriously its claims of alternative forms of knowledge and insight, it cannot simply resort to established scientific styles of writing. If we believe in the notion that form and content are one, artistic research will never yield fully satisfactory results if it has to translate its findings from an aesthetic to a propositional episteme to be recognized as a valid scientific practice. The essay, poised between those two epistemes, offers a negotiating ground for artistic research as a field of genuine epistemic value.

For the sake of gaining a better understanding of the essay, it is advisable to consult Adorno's seminal *The Essay as Form* from 1958. In a remarkable passage, he talks about how the essay is closing in on its topic. Like someone who is learning a new language in real life situations as opposed to in the study with a

dictionary, the essay won't boil down the meaning of a word to a corresponding one in a different language.¹ Depending on the circumstance, words have different connotations, one cannot learn the nuances of an applied language (Saussure's *parole*) in an abstract setting because the circumstances are as much part of the meaning of words as their denotations. So the essay's topic emerges from a configuration or constellation of aspects much like we slowly begin to understand a new word through its use. Its meaning is necessarily open and subject to constant refinement or change even.

More importantly however, the status of its meaning is liminal. It is on its way to become propositional knowledge but it isn't quite there yet – and maybe it will never quite arrive. This potentially never ending motion towards something, the constant emergence of meaning is fundamental to the epistemic procedure of the essay.

Saying / Showing

One way of understanding the difference between an essayistic and a traditional scientific practice lies in the different valuation of saying and showing. Whereas science heavily relies on propositional articulation (saying), the essay operates in the more performative mode of showing and exemplifying. Thereby, it doesn't degrade showing to a didactic, albeit redundant practice: "Giving examples is not an indirect means of explaining—in default of a better. For any general definition can be misunderstood too."²

Just as a simple translation for a word you heard again and again in different circumstances can seem unsatisfactory, insights made from essayistic procedures can often not be satisfyingly articulated. This is because the essay does not only operate with propositional but with performative knowledge: Some things need to be experienced in order to understand them. And once you experienced them, you cannot simply say what it was that you experienced, or, more precisely, by talking about the experience, you cannot reproduce how it enabled certain insights.

Digression lies at the heart of exemplifying practices. By allowing digressions from the seemingly straight line of reasoning and by constellating such digressions, the essay does much less strive to make explicit insights on its topic but provide a "force field [Kraftfeld]" as Adorno calls it, in which the recipient will come to his or her own conclusions.³

Fresh Figs

For the sake of demonstrating how digression and aesthetic, performative practices can create an immensely strong epistemic force field that can help to come to conclusions and overcome uncertainties in unexpected ways, I will use a very short story, a 'Denkbild' [thought-image] from Walter Benjamin called *Fresh Figs* (originally published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, May 1930).

¹ Theodor W. Adorno: „Der Essay als Form“, in: *Noten zur Literatur*, Frankfurt am Main, 1958, S. 29.

² Ludwig Wittgenstein: *Philosophical Investigations*, Translated by G. Anscombe, Oxford, 1958, § 71.

³ Adorno 1958, 30.

Benjamin is not a random choice in the realm of the essay. Adorno calls him the “unequaled master [unerreichter Meister]” of essayistic procedures in his literary as well as his more theoretical texts.⁴ His very many experiments with literary forms from aphorisms to montage culminate in the Arcades-Project [Passagen-Werk], which remained a fragment. Of this, Adorno claimed that it was constructed in a way that it would do without any apparent interpretation and that meaning shall come only from the shocking montage of its material.⁵ In this almost utopian understanding of a configurative practice, it seems as though Benjamin was set to let something else speak for itself, he was positive that through the constellation of given material, something could be shown that otherwise could not have been articulated in his own, explaining words. And so Benjamin states in the Arcades-Project: “I have nothing to say. Only to show. [Ich habe nichts zu sagen. Nur zu zeigen.]”⁶

The plot of the story is easily reproduced: The first person narrator is in Naples – for what reason we don’t know. He has been carrying with him a letter for some time, pondering about whether he should send it or not. Apparently the content of the letter would be of consequences that are either intimidating because of their gravity or hard to predict. In this frame of mind he travels by tram to a suburb – for what reasons we again don’t know – where he, seemingly without any destination strolls around. Out of sheer idleness he buys half a pound of fresh figs from an old lady. Since she didn’t have any bags or a paper to wrap the figs in, he stuffed all his pockets with them and carried the rest in his arms and his mouth. He of course started to eat the figs, but it was

“more like a bath, so powerful was the smell of resin that penetrated all my belongings, clung to my hands and impregnated the air through which I carried my burden. And then, after satiety and revulsion – the final bends in the path – had been surmounted, came the ultimate mountain peak of taste. A vista over an unsuspected landscape of the palate spread out before my eyes – an insipid, undifferentiated, greenish flood of greed that could distinguish nothing but the stringy, fibrous waves of the flesh of the open fruit, the utter transformation of enjoyment into habit, of habit into vice. A hatred of those figs welled up inside me; I was desperate to finish them, to liberate myself, to rid myself of all this overripe, bursting fruit. I ate to destroy it. Biting had rediscovered its most ancient purpose. When I pulled the last fig from the depths of my pocket, the letter was stuck to it. Its fate was sealed; it, too, had to succumb to the great purification. I took it and

⁴ Adorno 1958, 28.

⁵ Theodor W. Adorno: *Über Walter Benjamin*. Frankfurt, 1990, S. 22

⁶ Walter Benjamin: *Passagen-Werk*. Gesammelte Schriften Bd. V, hrsg. v. R. Tiedemann & H. Schweppenhäuser. Frankfurt 1991. S. 574

tore it into a thousand pieces.”⁷

This is quite a remarkable account for a form of aesthetic thinking. It is aesthetic because it is rooted entirely in a bodily sensation and it is a form of thinking because by provoking the decision to tear apart the letter, the sensation develops into an actual critical instance.

Profane Illumination

This little story is particularly telling in many ways. First off, it clearly marks the voracity as a digression from an ongoing conflict. It was “sheer idleness [Müssiggang]” and “sheer extravagance [Verschwendung]” that made him buy the figs. He did not think anything of these figs, they were no sign, no metaphor, they were everyday objects that stood for little more than the distraction by a sweet delight.

But then, through excess and intoxication, the figs become an enabler of a ‘profane illumination’ [profane Erleuchtung], a concept that Benjamin developed in his essay on surrealism. He sees bodily intoxication as an epistemic means to gain insights far more potent than those achievable through a study [Untersuchung].⁸

When we hear intoxication with Benjamin, many may think of his meticulous records of experiences with hashish. But these profane illuminations, as he notes, are not linked to the taking of drugs. They are a form of materialistic inspiration that is often linked to an everyday bodily experience. In the context of a profane illumination, the fig becomes the forbidden fruit, which not only causes expulsion from paradise but also marks the beginning of human knowledge. With Benjamin, the consummation of the figs and the insight that came from it, bear no consequences other than resolution. Profane illuminations are free from the fear of a punishing authority, for it is the human body itself that enables the insight.

Veracity in Voracity

At the end of the short text, the narrator ate himself into a state of rage in which his only goal it is to free himself from the figs. He calls this process great purification [grosse Reinigung].⁹ The resolution to tear apart the letter is a simple continuation from his way to cope with the burden of the fruits: “I ate to destroy” he says, and “biting had rediscovered its most ancient purpose.” It seems that this destructive atavism needed the trigger of a very simple, albeit extreme bodily experience in order to release its power. Only in this state of bodily excitement, the postponement of a reasonable decision (to send or not to send the letter) can come to a sudden end.

It is so sudden and unexpected, that the narrator needs to write down the occurrence in order to make an attempt at understanding what was going on.

⁷ Walter Benjamin: *Selected Writings*, Vol. 2, Part 1. Harvard University Press 2005, 359.

⁸ Walter Benjamin: *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. II/1, hrsg. v. R. Tiedemann & H. Schweppenhäuser. Frankfurt am Main 1977, S. 309.

⁹ Which is immensely ironic, because it is one of the deadly sins (gluttony), that leads to this purification.

Luckily, he chooses not to make explicit what happened, for it would suffocate the charm of his essayistic writing that is intriguing precisely because it simply shows by giving this example. It may be thanks to introspection that Benjamin wrote down this story – but for once, its epistemic moment is not linked to any form of willful reflexivity.

Only by digressing “from the straight and narrow road of the appetite” the narrator stumbles upon “the primeval forest of greed” where he finds a peculiar veracity in his voracity.

Neugier – The greed for the new

The German word for greed is *Gier*. There are two other words in German that contain *Gier*, but interestingly, both are not necessarily negatively connoted. There is *Neugier* [curiosity; literally greed for something new] and *Begierde* [desire, lust]. With those compounds, the German language shows a productive side of voracity and greed. There lies great potential in the fact that we are driven by our bodies' sensory discoveries and needs.

So great in fact, that Augustinus and the Catholic Church feared it. As we saw, the profane illuminations of our senses are free from the fear of a punishing authority. Subsequently, the Church must fear for its power. So curiosity was put under a moral ban for centuries. The *concupiscentia ocularum* [greed of the eyes] was one of the cardinal vices. Its aesthetic pleasure was condemned as void and vicious. It is hard to imagine in what kind of world we would live in if we hadn't left behind such a doctrine. Is modernity imaginable without its *Neugierde*, and without having rooted its epistemic hunger in the physis rather than the metaphysis? It seems to me that an artistic or aesthetic research is asking: Why not continuing on this path? Why not embracing the momentum and insights of our sensory apparatus to the full? If there are no words to adequately represent what this kind of science is trying to convey, it is probably on the right track.

Bibliography

- Adorno, Theodor W.: „Der Essay als Form“, in: *Noten zur Literatur*, Frankfurt am Main, 1958.
- Adorno, Theodor W.: *Über Walter Benjamin*. Frankfurt, 1990.
- Benjamin, Walter: *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. II/1, hrsg. v. R. Tiedemann & H. Schweppenhäuser. Frankfurt am Main, 1977.
- : *Passagen-Werk*. *Gesammelte Schriften* Bd. V, hrsg. v. R. Tiedemann & H. Schweppenhäuser. Frankfurt, 1991.
- : *Selected Writings*, Vol. 2, Part 1. Harvard University Press, 2005.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig: *Philosophical Investigations*, Translated by G. Anscombe, Oxford, 1958.

ARTISTIC RESEARCH WILL EAT ITSELF: EATING ONESELF REQUIRES ACROBATICS

Henryetta Duerschlag

Abstract:

After a decade of attempts to define artistic research without jeopardizing either the aesthetic, nor the epistemic value, this young discipline seems to find itself at a critical point. The pursuit of the not-yet known may be the smallest common denominator in research practices, and as such, also at core of artistic research. As for artistic practice, however, sensitivity, intuition and creativity are undoubtedly fundamental for any aesthetic production. In the following I want to approach the *modus operandi* of artistic research using an example of a movement in architecture and design of the first half of the 20th century.

The quest for a universally applicable formula for aesthetic quality occupies theoreticians and aesthetic practitioners for centuries. Separating sensible form from intelligible form (Aristotle), utility from beauty (Vitruv), or form from matter (Kant and Schiller), dualisms are inherent in most western theoretical approaches on art and architecture. With that in mind, it seems not surprising that the principle *form follows function* became the leitmotif of modernist design:

Whether it be the sweeping eagle in his flight or the open apple blossom
the toiling work horse, the blithe swan, the branching oak, the winding
stream at its base, the drifting clouds, over all the coursing sun, form ever
follows function, and this is the law. (Sullivan, 1896)

For Louis Sullivan, who coined the principle as we know it until today, function was equated with a natural purpose – any beautiful form deriving from nature. The slogan promised both a criterion for aesthetic judgement and a recipe for successful design. However, while the meaning of form as aesthetic appearance seemed consistent, the understanding of function varied radically throughout the past centuries.

The devastating consequences of WWI and new political and social movements, shifted the naturalist notion of function to a social and ideological purpose of architecture and design. Prominently propagated by the German Werkbund and Bauhaus, form should follow not only a material, constructive and instrumental

function, but also a societal one. In the wake of New Building (Neues Bauen), historicism, eclecticism and individualism as representations of the bourgeoisie were declared as the doom of a modern society.

With the Bauhaus building in Dessau (1926), architect Walter Gropius realised his functionalist ideal of progressive architecture. Next to the main school building complex, which incorporated lecture halls, offices, open workrooms, a theatre, a cafeteria and a dormitory, three master houses served as accommodation for the Bauhaus teachers. The modest, monochrome interior of the housing, however, was not much appreciated by the famous art teachers Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee, who claimed that they could not work creatively in such an environment. Consequently, they overpainted every room including the staircase with bright, saturated colours. The artists' act of resistance and critique towards Walter Gropius' implementation of the modernist principle illustrates that depending on the interpretation of the term 'function', a building may be formed according to the needs of material, room distribution and construction, yet still completely miss to consider the individual needs of the inhabitants.

Originating in aircraft building, streamline design became omnipresent in America of the 1940s – next to planes, cars and trains, everyday objects such as chairs, ventilators and even toasters were given the iconic curved shape. Suggesting innovation and modernity, the initial technical functionality dissolved into mere form, reversing Sullivan's principle. Swiss designer, artist and prominent Werkbund member Max Bill (Bill, 2008) heavily criticized this phenomenon, accounting for his conclusion that only rational engineering could produce genuine form out of function.

The twists and turns in the interpretation of Sullivan's principle illustrate the dangers of a well-intended articulation of a formula which should guarantee a certain standard in aesthetic practices. Once form can be thought as function, and function as form, the principle will necessarily eat itself.

Be it art - research, perception - reflection, feeling - thinking – dichotomies can be easily detected in artistic research and are tempting to use as categories for the assessment of works. So what happens, if we apply a similar formula to this young discipline? Exhibitions such as 'Object Oriented Ontology' (Kunsthalle Basel, n.d.), in which an entire school of thought serves as a curatorial concept? Or a Gucci show referencing Michel Foucault and Donna Haraway? Or the claim, that all art is research and all research art and thus, we would not need a distinct discipline?

Just like architects have to consider the functionality of a building in their design process, the artistic researcher has to consider the epistemic dimension of his or her work. But how to maintain the acrobatic act of between the aesthetic and the epistemic in practice, without falling back in a rigid dichotomous principle - a formula which would be either inconclusive and thus pointless, or too restrictive and thus counterproductive for innovative approaches?

In order to suggest an answer, let me go back to modern architecture. In 1927, the year the iconic Weissenhof Settlement was constructed as part of the Werkbund exhibition in Stuttgart, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe wrote in a letter to chief editor of the Werkbund journal 'Die Form':

Form as a goal always ends in formalism. For this striving is directed not towards an inside, but towards an outside. But only a living inside has a living outside. Only intensity of life has intensity of form. Every How is carried by a What. The unformed is not worse than the over-formed. The former is nothing; the latter is mere appearance. Real form presupposes real life. But not something that has already existed, nor something thought out. Here lies the criterion. We do not evaluate the result but the starting point of the creative process. Precisely this shows whether the form was discovered by starting from life, or for its own sake. That is why I consider the creative process so essential. Life is for us the decisive factor. In all its fullness, in its spiritual and real commitments.

(Mies van der Rohe in: Conrads & Bullock, 1975, p.102)

After pointing out the dangers of formalism, as one would expect by an active Werkbund member, he circumvents the term function and refers to life instead – in both its spiritual and real commitments. Compared to Horatio Greenough and Sullivan, who linked function to mechanisms solely found in nature, Mies van der Rohe's account seems to imply something third; something which is neither past, nor fantasy, the *real life* in this quote points towards an epistemic dimension.

While the idea to judge the outcome of a creative process merely by its starting point seems counterintuitive at first, one might ask what marks the beginning of any pursuit of the not-yet known. Following Mies van der Rohe's emphasis on the importance of the creative process, it is curiosity – *Neugier* – in terms of the voracity for novelty, as Aurel Sieber points out in his contribution on the digression in essayistic practice, which constitutes the stimulus for any kind of aesthetic and epistemic endeavour.

Whereas a direct implementation of a vision or idea might lack in reflexivity, the

most fundamental requirement for any aesthetic and also scientific undertaking is the capacity of being critical with one's own work. Once a *critical* point has been reached in the process of making, the producer pauses for a brief moment, perceives, assesses, and moves forward in any direction necessary. As being critical in the case of aesthetic practices demands both perception (in terms of *aesthesis*) and reflection, the question remains how to maintain the balance between what seems again a dichotomy.

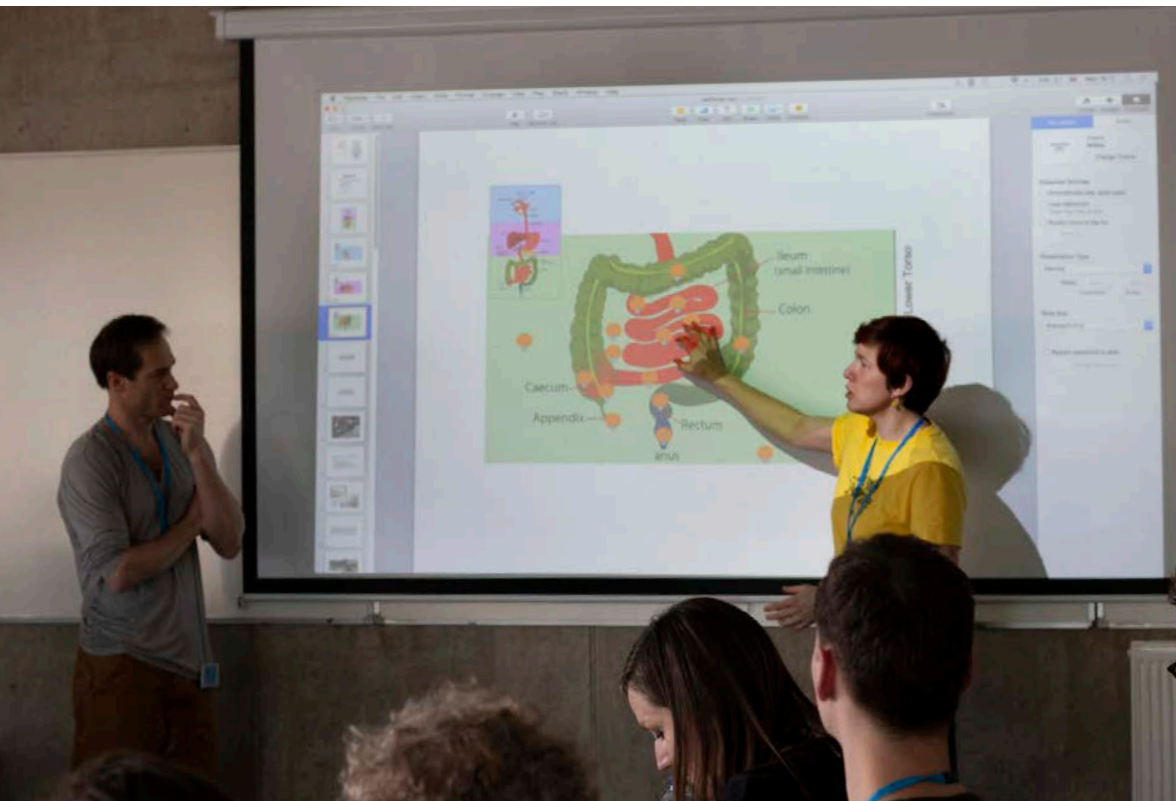
Sharing this question with my colleague, artist and practice-based PhD student, Felipe Castelblanco, as an answer he suggested the following quote by the Uruguayan author Eduardo Galeano:

Why does one write, if not to put one's pieces together? From the moment we enter school or church, education chops us into pieces: it teaches us to divorce soul from body and mind from heart. The fishermen of the Colombian coast must be learned doctors of ethics and morality, for they invented the word *sentipensante*, feeling-thinking, to define language that speaks the truth. (Galeano 1992, p.121)

Instead of dividing feeling from thinking, the concept of *sentipensante* gets at the heart of what it requires to practice not only artistic research, but also aesthetic judgement: feeling-thinking. Just as one oscillates between seeing a rabbit and a duck in Ludwig Wittgenstein's famous example of the *Aspektwechsel*, to feel-think requires a constant oscillation, in order to create a unity between both the aesthetic and epistemic, as well as the perceptive and the reflective. Like a Foucault pendulum, the artistic – or rather aesthetic – researcher needs to oscillate between constantly changing critical points. With each new trajectory, the pendulum enters unknown space in the same manner as the artistic researcher gains new insights in the process of making.

Bibliography

- Bill, M. & Bill, J. (2008) *Funktion und Funktionalismus: Schriften, 1945-1988*. Bern, Benteli.
- Conrads, U. & Bullock, M. (1975) *Programs and manifestoes on 20th-century architecture*. Cambridge, MIT Press.
- Galeano, E., Belfrage, C. & Schafer, M. (1992) *The book of embraces: images and text*. Norton paperback / Latin America. New York, NY London, Norton.
- Kunsthalle Basel (n.d.) *Regionale 18, 000 Object Oriented Ontology*. [Online]. Available from: <http://www.kunsthallebasel.ch/exhibition/19463/>.
- Sullivan, L.H. (1896) The tall office building artistically considered. *Lippincott's monthly magazine*. (339), 403–409.



PART 2. REGENERATION: ARTISTIC RESEARCH AS A PROCESS OF BECOMING



THE KISS– UTTERANCE SURROUNDING THE UTTERANCE WITHIN

Venke Aure and Mimesis Heidi Dahlsveen.

Abstract

From the performance:

The giant Angerboda grabbed Loke and kissed him. In this kiss, the creation of three monstrous children took place: the wolf Fenris, the serpent of Midgard and the death queen Hel. I told this to my son. My son died.

This is a story of blending utterances

This is a performing paper, a mixing of discourses based on a performance about the grieving mother

In the utterance within, the artist's voice emerges as an empirical-near being. The hurricane's eye of the paper is a performance that blends a personal narrative with a Norse myth. Through grotesque realism (Bakhtin), the artistic research looks at the synthesis between the private and the public. All that is elevated, spiritual, ideal and abstract is brought down to a material-bodily level, and in this, the degradation the life-giving laughter arises and displaces the entrenched ideas. The grotesque realism serve as a concretization of abstract ideas that manifest themselves bodily.

In their expression, the two authors mix the personal and the academic discourses using temporality, contrasts, interruptions and various physical placements.

Through narratives and written and spoken polyphonic utterances, the authors will clarify how the two concepts artistic and art-based research, coming from different academic meanings and focuses, can be blended in an utterance. In the blurring of the lines that separate art, academia and life, a criticism of a tradition, based on discrete disciplinary disciplines and institutional structures, arises.

Relational aesthetic strategies emerges as an approach connecting the utterances. The authors use Nicolas Bourriaud's relocation of the field of art that focuses on the work of relationships and meetings between works and persons in a specific context. In addition, the authors addresses Claire Bishop's criticism of the harmony perspective in Bourriaud's thinking where the grotesque is associated with an existential experience.

From the performance:

Cry, said the death queen Hel. My son said: do not cry. Make a laugh.

The kiss - utterance surrounding the utterance within

Heidi: 11.27 pm my son died in a bed at a hospital.

Venke: 11.27 pm her son died in a bed at a hospital.

Heidi: This paper is based on a storytelling performance that mixed an autobiographical story with Norse mythology where the theme was about a son dying.

In the kiss there is a blurring
between life and death
experience and words
personal and mythological
humans and gods
artistic and academic
black and white

The kiss is a third site; we want to tell you words, images and utterances of a third site.

Venke: I work with art-based research. I work with art-based methodology. What are the sources of art-based reflection? The core of the art-based research is the artistic experience meeting life itself. The grieving mother with the sounds, her breath, her son's breath. The layers in the narratives that meet the interpretive heart, body and mind of the researcher. Researchers with a thinking heart do not believe in pure objectivity ... As Alex Arteaga claimed: "It is a myth that reflection is only possible from the outside" (Arteaga 2010). The researcher's voice comes also from within. The researcher's voice from within is mixed with theoretical and analytical embodied reflections.

Heidi: 11.53 am.

I had been sitting by my dying son since 11. 53.

On my left side, there was a window.

I looked out of the window.

Venke: I hear the mother's breath, I hear the son's breath, I hear my brother's breath; I hear my heart breathing.

The artistic experience is outside and inside. Artistic experience brings forth layers of grief, hidden memories. The loss is being processed and present. It brings the loss to exist. What is real, what can we know, what does meaning mean? These questions are common for art and academia and blur the lines

between discipline-based positions. These blurrings offers a third site that is ambiguous, not clear, it is anti-structural rather than structural. With Jacques Derridas word, this site “does not settle for methodological procedures, it opens up passages, it marches ahead and marks a trail” (Derrida 1989, p.42). This site invites to use new entrances to create new performatives. This site will never see itself in relation to a simple opposition between art and academia.

This site is our third site.

Heidi: The window was open. It did not help. Both inside and outside the air was like...

Sometimes I got up and left the small room. So that others could sit down to say goodbye.

Then I sat down again.

Soon he was just a memory.

Death kissed him.

His skin turned gray.

A blue line on his lips.

11.27

the nurse said as gently as she could: “Now he has passed away.”

Why did she not say that he was dead?

What is the meaning of this?

To experience a child die, is painful and meaningless. The meaningless can be understood through a sense of what the meaning is. Meaning is not a finished size that can be weighed and measured, but meaning can be attached to qualities like relationships, future orientation, hope and harmony (Nyman & Sivonen, 2005).

To account for the presence of death is also conceptual difficult to articulate. To say that someone died, is a reality that often sounds too brutal, therefore it is packaged into concepts such as "he passed away" (Wilborg, 1998). Searching for the meaning, in our case, calls for a language.

In his incomplete work "The visible and the invisible", the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty examines the relationship between experience and verbalization of this experience. The experience is surrounded by a silence that the words breaks down (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 28). Experience is mute and unaware of its own meaning; the experience makes a call for the language (Ibid, p. 29). So to tell about my son's death, is a kind of shaping of meaning through using a narrative.

Merleau-Ponty also introduces the term "the flesh" which can be understood as the living body, the body that looks, feels, tastes and the like (Ibid, p. 54). The body is looked upon as something that is aware of its presence. The language realizes this presence. This corresponds to the development of this performance. Through the experience of losing a child, there was a need to make sense of this experience; I could not leave my dead son in silence. There were memories to be taken care of.

I had to speak, my language is a story, the story told created a new experience.

Venke: The artistic experience in the third site contributes to an epistemological plurism that challenges a conventional way of understanding knowledge from an analytic distance in academia.

The performative puts meaning making into motion. How can I relate to death, to what I do not understand, to the unpredictable?

Through artistic experiences, academia becomes inclusionary for more diverse ways of representing knowledge and meaning of life. The mother performs in such complex ways that we experience ourselves in this site where memory, emotion, fantasy, desire and understanding interact with one another (Madison 2012). The words, the colours, the sounds, the movements - this embodied knowledge in the third cite.

Heidi: The mixed, the blurring is both the danger and the creative force according to Norse mythology. It is clearly seen in the character called Loke who is a mix between giants and gods, chaos and reason. He is the one who makes sure that the world goes on, but he also the end as he kills the god Balder and with this creates the end of the world called Ragnarok (Munch, 1996).

Loke, one day he left the home of gods and went far away to the land of the giants. There he entered a forest. In between the trees, he saw something coming towards him. She had long, long legs like the trunks of the trees. She had long and heavy breasts, and the long hair was blowing, blowing in the wind created by her steps. She grabbed him in her strong arms and said: "I have been waiting for you." Then she kissed him. Her name was Angerboda, which means: You will regret this. Then they started, blending their bodies

and exchanging fluid, up along the trunks of the trees, down on the ground, here and there, up and down, in and out.

Venke: The third site: Sometimes she had to leave the room, so others could say good-bye.

Heidi: After a while, a good while, Loke wanted to leave. Angerboda said: "Excuse me, what about the children?" "The children?" This endless activity had resulted in three children. "I do not have time to take care of them," said Angerboda, "I am a busy woman, and I am running my own business. You being a father, you have to take the children with you. Therefore, Loke left with three children.

Venke: Who were they?

In our wondering inquiry, we relate to Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten who already in 18th century derived the concept of sensuous knowledge to describe aesthetic (Kjørup 2006, p. 8). Meaning that aesthetic is a specific type of knowledge.

We see sensuous knowledge together with the emphasis of the notion of embodied knowledge as crucial, for existing in the gap between words and what we consider as being reality. This understanding of aesthetics opens our story towards phenomenological sensibilities presented in poetic, factual, grotesque and expressive forms that include all senses in our efforts to make meaning in the world we live together.

Who were they?

Heidi: I will come back to that.

Venke: The grieving mother's voice and movements lead us into the stories... The Norse giant Angerboda and the trickster Loke request our bodies to participate in their blending of bodies, embedded in nature's circulation – bodies and the cosmic – overreaching in relation to individual biography.

This aesthetic experience becomes a part of mine experiences, - just like John Dewey put it in his effort to make distance to looking upon experience as something that happens exclusively within us, understanding experience as an essentially psychological concept- Dewey claimed that "The objects and events are as much a part of experience as we are ourselves" (Jackson 1998, p. 3).

The performative destabilizes conventional presentation of subjectivity through narrative elements that destruct, at least challenge conventional forms of representation. As the cultural theorist Morten Kyndrup's description highlights the performative character of meaningful action as a performative doing or a performative being that not only points into here and now and the future, but also look back in the archives (Kyndrup 2006).

Heidi: It reminds me of the flesh.

Venke: What do you mean?

Heidi: The flesh! I saw my son die; his body lost what I recognized in him. I saw, heard and felt that there was a different being lying there, not my son. He was an object. My living body reacted to the dead body; it was the sensation of Kristva's *Abject* (Kristeva, 1982); the paradox, the beginning and the end. To understand the meaning of this, I had to use my body to enter the memories; I had to use my body to turn the experience into a language of aesthetics. The body is also important for the grotesque realism found in the work by Mikhael Bakhtin (Bachtin, 2007). The grotesque realism as an aesthetic is the materially bodily principle of life. The body is unfinished as it still creates and is being created. The body reveals its being as an expanding and self-crossing element through acts like intercourse, pregnancy, birth, eating, drinking, satisfaction and fighting with death and the kiss (Ibid, p. 36).

Venke: The grotesque realism used in the third site, offers a narrative modality where the psychological aspects disappears and instead, the cosmic is emphasized, and the history of the individual is written in the circles of the body and nature. This means that the mourning mother's individual biography is inscribed in cyclical streams connected to bodily desire, life and death and this refers to what Bakhtin describe as our "collective body" (Mazour-Matusevich 2009, p. 8). The grieving mother's story as an artful production of meaning holds our body and mind in the grip between grotesque irony and fragility.

Heidi: Degradation is a prominent feature in grotesque realism. Everything that is spiritual, ideal and abstract is brought down to a material bodily level. The second feature is the transcending; it has no clear and normative boundaries between the cosmos, the social and the body (Bachtin, 2007, p. 31)

Venke: Already in 1955, the linguist J. L. Austin analyzed how to bridge the gap between words and events, and he proposed that the distinction between constative and performative utterances could be a starting point (Austin 1962). Austin created his third site where the performative utterance actually does something in the world, like promising, forgiving and make creative spaces (Ibid). The performative utterances challenge conventional and constative texts based on traditional understanding of time and reality.

Via grotesque realism, we are removed from the actual death happening 11.05.2016 and our own sorrow, - and the death of our beloved becomes situated in our body and soul. As such, the aesthetic experience is based upon both an epistemological and ontological elasticity because the experience demand elasticity. This can be connected to what Bakhtin call a polyfon approach regarding how to perceive knowledge and meaning in the fields of academia and art. As Della Pollock, that work with performance theory and cultural studies, claims: "Performance writing is evocative, reflexive, multivocal, citational, and always incomplete" (Pollock 1998, p. 80-95). For the traditionalists, for the conventional academics these concepts are outside the field of academia.

Unlike this, we, the two performative voices, search for the multivocal and simultaneous entrances for creating art, science and methodology in the third site. This multilayered encounter between art and academia develop, what we will call, an aesthetic epistemological position, common for the fields.

Heidi: Through his three children, Loke is the cosmos, the social and the body. First you have Midgaardsormen, a serpent, growing fast, the gods threw him into the ocean. There he continued to grow, until he reached his own tail. He is keeping the world together, if he let go of his tail, the world will collapse, land will sink, water will raise, and you have to find a new place to live. The second child was Fenrisulven, a wolf so big and greedy that he could swallow the moon. They had to tie him with a leach made of the sound of cat's paws, made of women's beard, made of birds spat, made of fish breath, made of the roots of the mountains.

Then the third child, called Hel, meaning whole, funny name for one who is half. Half-dead, half-alive, she herself being a kiss, ruling in the land of no visits, no one wants to go there. Queen of death, queen of those who dies of sickness.

My son was sick. He had cancer. I kissed him, transmitted the memories, and created a new being.

Bibliography

- Artega, A. (2010). Artistic research. Aesthetic practice as sense-making. *Lecture at Humboldt University Berlin*, June 8th, 2010.
- Austin, J., L. (1962). How to do things with words. Oxford: *The Clarendon Press*.
- Bachtin, M. (2007). *Rabelais och skattets historia: Francois Rabelais' verk og den folkliga kulturen under medeltiden och renässansen*. Bokförlaget Anthropolos.
- Bishop, C., (2004). Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics. The Palais de Tokyo: *October Magazine, Ltd. and Massachusetts Institute of Technology*. Bourriaud, N., (2007). *Relasjonell estetikk*. Oslo: Pax.
- Derrida, J. (1989). *Psyche: Inventions of the Other*. I: Reading de Man Reading. Waters. L. & Godzich. W. (red.) Minneapolis: *University of Minnesota Press*.
- Jackson., P. W. (1998). *John Dewey and the Lessons of Art*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Kjørup, S., (2006). *Baumgarten og æstetikens grundlæggelse*. København: Poetik Bibliotek.
- Kristeva, J. (1982). *Powers of horror An Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Kyndrup, M. (2006). Performativitet, Æstetik, udsigelse: Lille note om det performative æstetik. *Peripeti* (6).
- Madison, S. D. (2012). *Critical Ethnography. Method, Ethics, and Performance*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Mazour-Matusevich, Y. (2009) Nietzsche's Influence on Bakhtin's Aesthetics of Grotesque Realism." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 11.2 Merleau-Ponty, M. (1968). *The visible and the invisible followed by working notes*. North Western University Press.
- Munch, P. (1996). *Norrøne gude - og heltesagn*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget. Nyman, A.-C., & Sivonen, K. (2005). Livsmening som vårdvetenskapligt begrep. *Vård i Norden*, 25(78), 20-24.
- Pollock, D.(Ed) (1998). *Exceptional Spaces: Essays in Performance and History*. The University of North Carolina Press.
- Wilborg, M. F. (1998). Døendet - en begreppsanalyse. *Vård i Norden*, 18(47), 46-51.

TRANS: A HISTORY OF FAT

Julie Louise Bacon

Abstract

Changes in the production, distribution and promotion of culinary fats are implicated in the control of the body and populations by governments and big business. While the history runs deep, industrialisation and associated technologies of mass production and communication intensified the use of food as a vehicle for mythologies and ideologies that service powerful economic and political interests. This analysis is informed by the work of Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Jean Baudrillard and Zygmunt Bauman. A study of a sample of fat archetypes – butter, lard and olive oil – as well as newer highly-processed fats, breaks down the history of fat into a story of matter and marketing, tradition and appropriation. This leads to a reflection on the future of fat in a globalised and networked world.

FAT as a vehicle for ideology and myth

In a conference themed, *Artistic Research Will Eat Itself*, why discuss FAT? Through the sticky lens of culinary FAT,¹ we observe that we consume ourselves on a daily basis, transforming the chemical energy of this food group into kinetic energy for the body. When heightened energy output is called for, from the basic requirements of physical activity to the demands of heightened productivity, we keep the body and the economy going by burning our fat deposits.

However, FAT is more than an energy store, it is a medium of power relations in industrialised society. In this sense, FAT is ideological: the modes through which the foodstuff and its imagery are produced, distributed and incorporated, shape and perpetuate political and economic practices of body management and psychological conditioning that lie at the heart of mass culture. The modern history of FAT is deeply embedded in the engineering of status and class, control of individual habits, images of self and cultural value systems, enabling and inhibiting a collective and personal sense of agency.

¹ My discussion of fat employs the working definition of fat generally used in food science which includes solid and liquid edible lipids.

FAT is also the stuff of mythology,

Myths [concern] aetiological tales, stories of origins [...] Mythic themes (which gauge the profoundest dimensions of human life) ground our aesthetic sensibilities (not unlike the manner in which principles ground our rational understandings.) (Hall, 1993)

In his seminal 1957 study of mass culture, *Mythologies*, Roland Barthes explored how ideological constructs, such as national pride and masculine courage, concepts such as good taste and hygiene, and values such as the base and the refined are conveyed through images and ideas that we consume in popular culture. Two essays on food featured in this work: 'Steak-frites' and 'Wine and Milk'. As an example of the power of mythic representation to shape collective representations and naturalise ideology, Barthes explained in 'Wine and Milk' that wine as a medium embodies the idea of Frenchness and national traits of conviviality and gastronomy.

Barthes wrote *Mythologies* in an era defined by the massive deployment of mechanical reproduction in the reshaping of material culture and daily life. The essay collection addresses the evolution of language forms in a world where systems of mass communication were emergent. The work points to the fact that, far from diminishing, the proliferation and consumption of objects, images and ideas offers new opportunities to press myth into the service of regimes of meaning and authority.

Cultural reality has changed dramatically in the six decades that have elapsed since the publication of Barthes' study of mass culture in post-war Europe. In the 21st Century, the mass media of Barthes age has been replaced by new and more complex permeations of industrial politics and digital economies. The boom of information technology has fuelled the ideology of globalisation and the conditions of acceleration, compression and saturation that characterise daily life in network reality.

Although much has changed from 1957 to 2018, Barthes' approach to examining the mass of interconnected ideas beneath the surface of everyday appearances, which coalesce to produce reality and orthodoxy, remains compelling. The means of navigating the excess of stimuli and the saturation of messages to which the human is subject comes to the fore at a time when access to information is much less a challenge than the availability of consistent motifs with which to bind themes together. This journey through selected culinary FATs – a drop in the FAT ocean – following human traditions and industrial processes to the present

day, exposes the body and culture as arenas for economic and political power-play.

Reflections on the social history of some FAT archetypes: tradition and appropriation, matter and marketing

Part one: Hard FATs

The production of butter goes back about 10,000 years to the time when our human ancestors first began domesticating animals.

Butter probably originated amongst the nomadic peoples of central Asia quite plausibly first discovered by accident after a hard day in the saddle during which the rider's neglected container of milk had been constantly churned. It's use gradually spread to India and Europe, although Greece and Rome, both olive-oil cultures, it was at first treated with both suspicion and derision as an inferior foreign product. (Ayto, 2002)

A promotional website for butter adds historical substance to its FAT lineage, noting that,

The first reference to butter in written history was found on a 4,500-year-old limestone tablet illustrating how butter was made [...] In ancient Rome, butter was valued cosmetically. The ancient Egyptians valued it as a cure for eye problems [...] it was an old English custom to present newlyweds with a pot of this creamy delight as a wish for fertility and prosperity. (Dairy Farmers of Canada, 2018)

The production of lard also goes back thousands of years in Europe and,

has a deep tradition in many rustic regional cuisines. In any culture where pigs were raised, the fat of the animal was usually considered just as important as the meat. (Wikipedia, Lard, 2018)

Throughout the early centuries of the second millennium, and the Middle Ages, political events in Europe – from regional growth to wars between nations – redistributed borders, land ownership and land management practices. This resulted in a shift from small holdings to larger estates, the scaling up of farming practices, and absentee landlords. Further dramatic and violent transformations of local economies and cultures were set in motion when the development of transportation and trade routes in the 16th and 17th centuries brought massive

waves of colonisation. When settlers travelled abroad from the Old World, they took with them their farming and culinary practices and knowledge. The USA as a country was to an extent built on lard, which was the staple fat of the American frontier. The history outlined here in broad brushstrokes, from feudalism to a world governed by mercantilism and the proto-Capitalist practices inherent to colonial projects, influenced every aspect of supply and demand chains, including hard, historical FATs.

The production, purchase and consumption of FAT was to undergo a still greater shift, in terms of the scale and speed of change, with the onset from the 1850s of the Industrial Revolution. Local climate and food production were traditionally strong determinants of costs. However, the markers of cultural value and the economic cost of foodstuffs shifted as the world was remade by the heightened movement of people and the circulation of goods.

In the late 1800s, butter suffered a major blow when in France, Emperor Napoleon III offered a reward for the creation of a replacement for butter, as a cheap alternative for the armed forces and lower classes. Taking up the challenge, in 1869 the French chemist Hippolyte Mège-Mouriès designed a new FAT known as oleomargarine. His creation, which later became known as margarine, used beef tallow as a raw material. In 1871, Mège-Mouriès sold his invention to the Dutch firm Jurgens, which later became part of Unilever, catapulting the history of FAT production into the battleground of a new kind of big business.

Advertisements promoting the new processed FAT drew on idealisations of pastoral life which were of increasing mythic appeal to working populations living in ever-denser cities. Across Europe people moved en masse off the land as subsistence practices were impacted by land privatisation and the promise of a better life in the city took hold. Working men and women of the proletariat class created by industrialisation received little or none of the wealth that was contributing to the rapid growth of the middle and upper classes, rather the market for cheaper and less perishable foodstuffs including margarine grew.

Image 1 (Margarinefabriek Kinheim, c. 1890)

Some thirty years later, at the beginning of the 20th Century, aggressive corporate marketing led to a decline in the consumption of butter's counterpart, lard.

Lard didn't just fall out of favour. It was pushed. It was a casualty of a battle between giant business and corporate interests. (Smith, 2012)

The then-emerging American corporate food giant Procter & Gamble launched an advertising campaign undermining lard's public image. Meanwhile, the company's laboratories were designing a FAT alternative. The product was launched as Crisco, a vegetable shortening manufactured through the new process of hydrogenating cottonseed oils.² The company touted the pureness and wholesome nature of the laboratory foodstuff and packaged the product in white, with imagery of a new breed of family, thriving off the revolutionary FAT.

Lard was common in many peoples' diets until the turn of the 20th century. While throughout its history, lard had been cheaper than most vegetable oils, new technology and factory production line methods resulted in vegetable oils becoming cheaper than lard. The technique of hydrogenation invented by the Nobel Prize winning chemist Paul Sabatier was seized upon as a massive business opportunity, transforming the world of FAT from the early 1900s onwards; animal fats were replaced with an array of processed vegetable-based alternatives in the diet of the general population. The economic depression of the 1930s, followed by World War II and the resulting shortage of animal products, were powerful factors causing the market for synthetic FAT to grow dramatically.

In the 19th and first half of the 20th Century, the tiers of socio-economic status and class culture entrenched by the Industrial Revolution drove differences in FAT consumption across the population. In societies increasingly stratified by variances in education, wealth, and life expectancy, images promoting good taste and sophistication had a strong impact. These combined with the romanticisation of the agricultural world of the past in a new modern myth of the pastoral ideal

The invention of hydrogenated vegetable oils also heralded the creation of the first man-made FAT to enter the human food chain: trans-FATs. Although margarines had varying amounts of the substance, Crisco was the first commercially available pure trans-FAT. In 1957, Americans ate as much margarine as they did butter. However, the marketing of trans-fat margarines as both a healthier and cheaper butter alternative, opened the spread in margarine's favour. Animal fat had become a food faux pas.

"The massive advertising of health claims for margarine transformed a generally disreputable product of inferior quality and flavor into a great commercial success." William G. Rothstein wrote in his book *Public Health and the Risk Factor*. (Ferdman, 2014)

² The product made use of cotton, one of the materials that defined the fortunes and landscape of Industrial Revolution.

In the context of a world emerging from two catastrophic wars, defined by the need to stimulate renewal and growth, the promotion of health began to take over from mythologised versions of the past in commercial marketing and government policy campaigns. Branding exercises from the 1960s onwards increasingly linked images of happiness to ideals of healthiness. A sanitised, scientific view of life was promoted, presenting a more forensic version of the concept of the wholesome that dominated early FAT advertising.

Image 2 (New Promise Margarine, 1973)

Such conditioning of the individual's approach and attitude to their life and body is indicative of the techniques of control described by Michel Foucault in his discussion of the subjecting of populations to the scrutiny and authority of regulatory regimes. (Foucault, 1975) Within the universal ideology of health being promoted, the female body was subject to a particularly invasive form of psychological colonisation that is still going strong today. Women were expected to be ideal housewives and cooks, while managing to be ever slimmer, full of energy, and the epitome of wellbeing and good style in the process. The divide between the pushing of health messages through food advertising and the actually quality of the products promoted also played out differently across the classes. Cheaper industrial foodstuffs were primarily targetted at the working classes who paid and continue to pay the real rather than advertised health costs of a highly-processed diet.³

Image 3 (Crisco Cake Advertisement, c.1965)

The implication of FAT in the objectification of the body took place in a world increasingly dominated by appearances. In 1967, Guy Debord argued that the growth of the image economy commodifies life and produces *The Society of Spectacle*. Here, Debord argued that an emphasis on the capture and reproduction of life – from consumerism and surveillance to entertainment – widens the divide between images and reality, impoverishing mental and social life.

Such was the power of the food industry that despite the fact that medical research had revealed significant concerns about the impact of trans-FAT on the body as early as 1956, it was not until the 1990s that the FAT bubble, contained by the narrative of healthy hydrogenated plant FAT, eventually burst.

³ The displacement of knowledge and so power away from local communities and lay practitioners to skilled professionals, invariably the educated middle classes, is discussed by Foucault.

From a nutritional standpoint, the consumption of trans fatty acids results in considerable potential harm but no apparent benefit. There is no safe level of Trans-fat consumption. (Wiki Trans-Fat, 2018)

The scandal of trans-FAT exposed the ideological aspect of the health industry – which implicated government and corporate giants – and its shadowy connections with the business of engineering public opinion. Ideas that had been presented as facts proved otherwise, and spectacularly so. A new chapter in the history of FAT began. The revelation resulted in the removal of a wide range of products from supermarket shelves, which were transformed from affordable alternatives to public health menaces.

Part two: Liquid FATs

This turnaround in synthetic FAT fortunes also contributed to a major drive in a FAT market that had been developing strongly since the 1980s: olive oil. The decade marked a transition in global economic and politics. Neoliberalism emerged as a dominant political ideology and with it came the redesign of trade relations, the reshaping of markets, and trends of privatisation and deregulation. Access to travel, tourism, a never-ending stream of products, and the consumption of cultural experiences via the media combined with these forces to shape the increasingly connected and interdependent economic and cultural climate of globalisation.

In this context, the story of olive oil played a leading role in the redesigned ideology of good taste and health in the over-developed and increasingly hyper-networked West. Food multinationals used olive oil to promote tropes of the 'international' and the 'Mediterranean' as dietary and so cultural ideals. The qualities of olive oil as 'virgin', 'extra-virgin' and 'cold-pressed' constructed a politics of authenticity, exclusivity and sophistication.

From the 1990s to the 2010s, in the shadow of the revelation of the toxicity of trans-FATs, the number of olive oils on the shelves of first niche and boutique food outlets, and then supermarkets, multiplied rapidly. In line with the expansionist principle of Capitalism, new cheaper varieties of oil were made available to mass markets, with aspirational branding generating the idea of exclusivity for all. These corporate and media strategies reformed the image of national identity in olive growing areas, exporting highly mythologised versions of life in these regions to affluent markets overseas. Meanwhile, in the context of countries including Italy, Greece and Spain at this time, olive oil remained a food stuff of the people, with the practice of families and communities coming together to grow and press their own product still very much in vigour.

Olive oil as a FAT archetype has a deep history, making it ripe for the symbolic mining activities of corporate food giants and their marketing departments.

Fossil evidence indicates the olive tree had its origins some 20–40 million years ago in the Oligocene region corresponding to Italy and the eastern Mediterranean Basin.

The olive plant was first cultivated some 7,000 years ago and begun to be tended more intensively in the early Bronze Age (3150 to 1200 BCE). Its origin can be traced to the Levant based on written tablets, olive pits, and wood fragments found in ancient tombs. (Wikipedia, Olive, 2018)

The distribution of olive growing regions in the world today tells a story of changing patterns of economic and political growth and decline, the history of Empires, legacies of colonialism, and the shaping of mythic images of the New World. The contrasting fortunes of California and the Palestinian Territories underline the contemporary geopolitics in which olive oil production is implicated. While the USA is currently suffering on many economic and political fronts, California is emerging as a dominant force in the culinary world through olive oil. (Robison and Silver, 2016) By contrast, the story of the abandonment, destruction and assimilation of olive groves in the Palestinian Territories reflects the colonisation of a people by means of its economic and cultural resources.

While olive trees and their by-product olive oil help constitute geopolitical order, the plant also embodies cultural ingenuity and diversity,

Through the ages, olives and olive oil have been used as food, fuel, light source, lubricant, soap, a weapon and sacred oil. (Hayes, 2013)

The species is a medium of resilience and self-sufficiency,

The olive tree looks like death, but to countries where it grows, it sometimes literally means life. The olive is as much a savior of man in semi-arid areas of poor soil as the date of the oases in the desert. (Hayes, 2013)

While a mythologised view of nature is often promoted through the mass marketing of the FAT, olive oil production speaks of the deep interaction of tradition and technology.

Since many olive cultivars are self-sterile or nearly so, they are generally planted in pairs with a single primary cultivar and a secondary cultivar selected for its ability to fertilize the primary one. (New World Encyclopaedia, 2015)

Olives were one of the first processed foods. At a Stone Age site in Spain 8000-year-old olive seeds were found and archaeologists speculate that the olives had to have been processed somehow, otherwise they would have been too bitter to eat. (Hayes, 2013)

In tandem with the rise of olive oil consumption, the decline of the empire of trans-FAT led to a return to favour of once-demonised FATS. Unlike many margarines and vegetable shortenings, butter and unhydrogenated lard contains no trans-FAT.

In the 1990s and early 2000s the unique culinary properties of lard and butter were rediscovered by chefs and bakers, leading to a partial rehabilitation of this fat among "foodies." The particular popularity of lard...among aficionados of traditional British cuisine... to a "lard crisis" in late 2004. (Wikipedia, Lard, 2018)

As hard FAT archetypes currently experience a revival in fortunes, and myths of the ancient and rustic are promoted through olive oil branding, food technology continues to design products to generate new market opportunities. In the 21st Century, the history of olive oil has exploded into a fashion for oily extractions from all manner of fruits, nuts and seeds: from avocados to macadamias and flaxseed. The higher the expenditure of labour required to extract a product, the more potent the idea of rarity that is manufactured. Meanwhile products such as one-calorie olive oil spray, which aim to defy their own fattiness, epitomise the transition from consuming substances to signs discussed by Debord, and developed by Jean Baudrillard's concept of simulacra.

Image 4 (Fry Light, 2015)

The recent popularisation of so-called paleo-diets, and the associated backlash to processed and synthetic foods, has added a new layer of mythology to the concept of the ancient. As the packaging of the culinary past points to a new mythic turn, it is potent to recall the history of a FAT once central to the oldest indigenous culture in the world. The Bogong Moth is native to Australia, and is a species rich in a FAT that is highly nutritious to humans.

Once, their annual migration united families from different Aboriginal nations, who came together to roast the insects on hot rocks in the Brindabellas and the Snowy Mountains, ACT. (Burgess, 2016)

The loss of this practice following European settlement in the area serves as reminder of both the value of local knowledge and tradition, and the assimilationist forces of modernity. It underscores the deadly consequences of the imposition of cultural practices that disregard ways of life that are connected with deep knowledge of the body and land.

Zygmunt Bauman has used the metaphor of liquidity to describe the malleability of meaning and so instability of relationships in globalised and networked reality. The culinary oil industry, and the marketing of FAT at large, exemplifies the interchangeability of forms of cultural representation that typifies the global economic practices of advanced capitalism and the symbolic field of network reality.

Conclusion: envisaging the future through FAT

In the last 150 years, significant ideological and corporate battles have been waged through FAT, ranging from the control of territories and populations, to the manufacturing of collective taste and images of self. These battles extend deep into history and are unfolding in contemporary practices, associated with what some have coined the fourth industrial revolution, to create new means of colonising the body and culture.

The history of FAT archetypes and their technological derivatives demonstrate how FAT is implicated in what Foucault refers to as biopower,

an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations. (Foucault, 1976)

The history of FAT exposes the fate of truth and facts in a world where the representational force of mass media combines with the power of big business. It also demonstrates the consequences that arise from the pressing of science into the service of political and corporate agendas.

FAT is revealed as an actor in networks of power and meaning that accrete through material, social and mental worlds over time. In this sense, FAT foregrounds the potential of a trans-historical reading of the relationship between forms, ideas and agency. Further to this, looking ahead, could specific features of

FAT inspire a renewal of modes of social practice? FAT is a key component in the process of emulsification, which involves the creation of a mix from liquids that are usually immiscible. Could this process be analogous to models of community-making, involving the holding of difference in a whole, in a binding that does not subsume the other?

FAT as an idea and a material seems to invoke the opposite of the spiritual, of 'trans-cendence'. FAT literally weighs us down, it is viscera, mundanity. It is the messy viscosity that liposuction reveals. Nothing sums this up, materially and metaphorically so much as the contemporary discovery of so-called fatbergs.

A fatberg weighing the same as 11 double decker buses and stretching the length of two football pitches is blocking a section of London's ageing sewage network. The congealed mass of fat, wet wipes and nappies is one of the biggest ever found. (Taylor, 2017)

Yet, is there a positive aspect to the horror of the fatberg? It embodies a reality that is highly dispersed and distributed, laying bare the not-so-secret underbelly of a society marked by aggressive Capitalism, consumerism and psychological conditioning. When this accretion is viewed as a de-internalisation of a mass of ingested orthodoxies, could the aesthetics of the fatberg inspire a new politics?

The story of FAT is growing in the Network Ages. Sedentary lifestyles and obesity blend with arrays of FAT-free products, as extreme dieting practices are available for the masses and liposuction is on offer for the few. Yet, beyond the human, all organisms contain FAT; as a medium, FAT embodies the latent energy of all life forms, and with it potential and movement. This in mind, could a decolonised view of FAT, concerned with the ways in which matter, power, energy and agency interact – across human bodies, cultures and species – reimagine FAT as an embodiment of a visceral and vital Commons to come?

Bibliography

Ayto, J. (2002) *An A to Z of Food and Drink*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Barthes, R. (1959) *Mythologies*. Paris: Les Lettres Nouvelles.

Baudrillard, J. (1983) *Simulacra and Simulations*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Bauman, Z. (2000) *Liquid Modernity*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Burgess, K. "Bogong Moths, the bush tucker food sweeping Canberra", accessed 1st May 2018.
<<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/conservation/bogong-moths-the-bush-tucker-superfood-swarming-canberra-20161102-gsg284.html>>

Dairy Farmers of Canada, accessed 1st May 2018.
<<https://www.dairygoodness.ca/butter/the-history-of-butter>>

Debord, Guy. (1967) *La Société du Spectacle*. Paris: Buchet Chastel.

Ferdman, R.A. "The generational battle of butter v. margarine", accessed 1st May 2018.
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2014/06/17/the-generational-battle-of-butter-vs-margarine/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.06b98d5d42f3> Updated 2014

Foucault, M. (1975) *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison*, Paris : Gallimard.

Foucault, M. (1976) *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1*. Paris: Gallimard.

Hall, D.L. (1993) *Richard Rorty: Prophet and Poet of the New Pragmatism*. New York: State University of New York Press.

Hays, J. "Olives", accessed 1st May 2018.
<<http://factsanddetails.com/world/cat54/sub343/item1573.html>> Updated 2013

New World Encyclopaedia, "Olive", accessed 1st May 2018.
<<http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Olive>> Updated 2015

Robison, P. and Silver, V. "Is American Olive Oil about to have its Moment", accessed 1st May 2018.
<<https://www.bloomberg.com/features/2016-california-olive-oil/>> Updated 2016

Smith, R. "Who Killed Lard", accessed 1st May 2018.
<<https://www.npr.org/sections/money/2012/02/03/146356117/who-killed-lard>> Updated 2012

Taylor, M. "Total Monster: Fatberg blocks London Sewage System", accessed 1st May 2018.

<<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/sep/12/total-monster-concrete-fatberg-blocks-london-sewage-system>> Updated 2017

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. "Olive Harvest Marked by Access and Protection Concerns", accessed 1st May 2018.

< <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/olive-harvest-marked-access-and-protection-concerns>>

Wikipedia, Hippolyte Mège-Mouriès, accessed 1st May 2018.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippolyte_M%C3%A8ge-Mouri%C3%A8s> Updated 2018

Wikipedia, Lard, accessed 1st May 2018.

<<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lard>> Updated 2018

Wikipedia, Olive, accessed 1st May 2018.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olive#cite_note-Therios-20> Updated 2018

Wiki, Trans-Fat, accessed 1st May 2018.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trans_fat> Updated 2018

Image 1

Margarinefabriek Kinheim (c. 1890) viewed 1st May 2018.

< <https://www.pinterest.com.au/pin/306033737159620160/>>

Image 2

New Promise Margarine can help lower cholesterol. Promise (1973) viewed 1st May 2018.

<<https://www.flickr.com/photos/29069717@N02/14207791461>> Creative Commons: Non commercial

Image 3

Crisco Cake Advertisement (c. 1965) viewed 1st May 2018.

<<http://www.genderfoodculture.com/>> Creative Commons: Non commercial

Image 4

Ready-made Review: Fry Light (2015) viewed 1st May 2018.

<<https://kellsslimmingworldadventure.wordpress.com/2015/08/12/ready-made-review-fry-light/>>



Image 1: *Margarinefabriek Kinheim* (c. 1890).

New Promise Margarine can help lower cholesterol.

Promise.



Promise tastes like butter.

Promise[®] tastes like butter. Yet when hundreds of people used Promise Margarine *instead of* butter in clinical tests, the average cholesterol level for the group went down. In just three weeks.

How can Promise Margarine help lower cholesterol? Because it's so polyunsaturated. Polyunsaturated foods can help reduce cholesterol levels when they replace saturated fats in your diet. That's why many doctors say replace some saturated fats with polyunsaturated foods.

And Promise Margarine is far more polyunsaturated than any leading margarine. Even the 100% corn oil brands.

Should you lower your cholesterol level? Many doctors believe that lower cholesterol levels can help reduce the risk of heart attack. Ask your doctor to tell you how he feels about an overall cholesterol reduction program for you.

We can tell you that Promise Margarine has been clinically shown to lower cholesterol. Promise.

Many doctors recommend the following points to reduce your risk of heart attack:

- Replace some saturated fats with polyunsaturated foods.
- Reduce, if overweight.
- Stop smoking.
- Exercise regularly.
- Avoid stress.
- Have regular medical checkups.

Average cholesterol reduction with Promise after just three weeks.



Group	Average cholesterol reduction
With butter	~100
With Promise	~150

Percent of polyunsaturates in leading margarines.



Margarine Brand	Percent of polyunsaturates
Promise	100%
Other Leading Margarines	~20%



**Promise tastes like butter.
But your body knows better.**

Image 2: *New Promise Margarine can help lower cholesterol. Promise.* (1973).



Image 3: *Crisco Cake Advertisement* (c. 1965).



Image 4: *Ready-made Review: Fry Light* (2015).

EXTISPICY IN THE EVERYDAY: AN EXPLORATION OF HUMAN-ENVIRONMENT BINARIES THROUGH THE GUT

Amanda Couch

Abstract

The workshop 'Extispicy in the Everyday: An Exploration of Human-Environment Binaries Through the Gut' aimed to explore the conference theme *Regeneration: Artistic Research as a Process of Becoming*, particularly as Donna Haraway (2016) would say 'a becoming with', through ecofeminism and new materialism, neuro-gastroenterological research, and the ancient practice of *extispicy*, divination using the entrails, reinterpreted through ordinary daily actions. Over the course of 90 minutes, participants listened to, experienced, enacted, and materially investigated theories of interconnectedness through stretching exercises, walking, noticing, collecting, photography, the cutting open and inspection of the contents of a pie, and commensality (eating together), to problematise thresholds between bodies, environment, and food, and to re-conceptualise these seemingly bounded entities.

Introduction

The workshop, 'Extispicy in the Everyday: An Exploration of Human-Environment Binaries Through the Gut' aimed to explore the conference theme *Regeneration: Artistic Research as a Process of Becoming*, particularly as Donna Haraway (2016) would say 'a becoming with', through ecofeminism, new materialism, neuro-gastroenterological research, and the ancient practice of *extispicy*, divination using the entrails, reinterpreted through ordinary daily actions. Over the course of 90 minutes, participants listened to, experienced, enacted, and materially investigated theories of interconnectedness through stretching exercises, walking, noticing, collecting, photography, the cutting open and inspection of the contents of a pie, and commensality (eating together), to problematise thresholds between bodies, environment, and food, and to re-conceptualise these seemingly bounded entities.

Drawing on the emerging scene of multispecies ethnography, ideas of becoming, and particularly '*becoming-with*' (2008:244), is described by Eben Kirksey and Stefan Helmreich as 'new kinds of relations emerging from nonhierarchical alliances, symbiotic attachments, and the mingling of creative agents', which is loosening the grip of anthropocentrism (Kirksey and Helmreich, 2010:546). 'If we appreciate the foolishness of human exceptionalism', Haraway proposes, 'then we know that becoming is always becoming *with*—in a contact zone where the

outcome, where who is in the world, is at stake' (Haraway, 2008:244). And I propose with the help of political theorist Jane Bennett in her book, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, that 'becomings with' are not limited to encounters with human and non-human animals, but are also across, and with, non-living materials. Such matter contains 'thing-power aris[ing] from bodies inorganic as well as organic' (Bennett, 2010:7) [...] which 'can inspire a greater sense of the extent to which all bodies are kin in the sense of inextricably enmeshed in a dense network of relations' (Bennett, 2010:13).

Extispicy in the Everyday... draws on the ancient practice of *extispicy*, divination using the entrails, which is reinterpreted in the workshop through ordinary daily actions, stretching exercises, walking, noticing, collecting, photography, the cutting open and inspection of the contents of a pie, and commensality (eating together).

What is *Extispicy*?

The practice of *extispicy*, divination using the entrails, was one of the most omnipresent of divination practices across the ancient world. The main practice of *extispicy* was *hepatoscopy* or liver divination, where, at the moment of sacrifice the liver, perceived as a tablet, was inscribed with a message from the gods. The liver was read, the signs interpreted, as well as other organs examined, such as the convolutions of the colon or 'palace of the intestines' (Weidner, 1917:194).

The interconnected relationship between the environment, actions, events and celestial bodies, and the organs of animals was at the heart of divination practices across the ancient world. 'Many of the ancient representations of spiralling mazes from different cultures', writes Classics scholar Robert Temple, 'are perfect representations of the spiral colons of lambs or pigs' (Temple, 1982:21). But 'these were not just sheep's guts: they were signs from the gods' (Myers Shelton, 2013:12). The Romans and Etruscans saw the movements of the heavenly bodies 'and the complex patterns of coiled intestines [...] which] when laid out for inspection, form a distinctive labyrinthine spiral' (Temple, 1995:62).

Mesopotamian specialist Ulla Koch-Westenholz summarises that 'all branches of divination [...] shared the same fundamental idea: events in the universe are related to one another; if one occurs, its correlate may be expected' (Koch-Westenholz, 2000:11).

In this workshop, I draw parallels between the practice of *extispicy* and with the fields of new materialism, ecofeminism as well as recent neuro-gastroenterological research, which reveals that our digestive tract is the most important site where the external world meets our internal body, appearing to be inside our bodies but actually the exterior, outside the body border. Michael Gershon in his 1998 book, *The Second Brain* is one of the early pioneers of this new knowledge. Here Emma Young reports on the findings in *New Scientist* in 2012.

'Embedded in the wall of the gut, the enteric nervous system (ENS) has long been known to control digestion. Now it seems it also plays an important role in our physical and mental well-being. It can work both

independently of and in conjunction with the brain in your head and, although you are not conscious of your gut “thinking”, the ENS helps you sense environmental threats, and then influences your response’.
(Young, 2012:39).

‘There is a brain in the belly, literally’ (Schechner, 2001:35). Continuing this train of thought, philosopher Shannon Sullivan offers a new feminist perspective in her recent book, *The Physiology of Sexist and Racist Oppression* in which she advocates the idea of ‘Cloacal Thinking’, a term coined by surgeon, Ghislain Devroede. Cloacal thinking considers the pelvic area holistically, as ‘a psychosomatically integrated unit, appreciating the functional and co-constitutive relationships between the urinary, genital, and lower digestive tracts’ (Sullivan, 2015:67), which makes sense when we know that during development in the womb there were no divisions between the three systems, ‘they all end in a common cavity: the cloaca’ (Devroede, cited in Sullivan, 2015:77). This reality is one of a ‘physiological sharing, exchanging, and mingling with itself’ but which does not stop at the lower digestive tract (Sullivan, 2015:77). The body, Sullivan writes, ‘is shared all along in different ways and to different degrees, and its world also can be mingled with that of other people’ (Sullivan, 2015:77). She shares new research where ‘gut inheritances’ can also be ‘passed down’, non-genetically or ‘unconsciously’ as ‘heirlooms’ across generations (Sullivan, 2015:77). It is the gut and particularly the gut wall, she argues, that is ‘the site of a dynamic co-constitution in which what is “properly” body and what is “properly” world are necessarily and productively indeterminate’ (Sullivan, 2015:69).

Part 1

With these ideas in mind, we then began to focus on the body. On your mat the first part of the *extispicy* will begin. Through a series of simple breathing exercises and stretching postures, we will gently twist, squeeze and stimulate the abdominal organs, with the aim to conjure, invoke, and call upon an awareness of our innards.

I need to declare that I am not a yoga teacher. But these are simple stretches that many of you will be familiar with. Nothing too strong. It is you who is the expert on your own body, therefore please listen to it and if anything becomes painful or uncomfortable at any point, do stop or come out of the posture.

So now make your way to lying on your back. If you have lower back issues, or it feels more comfortable, bend your legs placing the feet on the floor, to support your lower back. Otherwise place your legs straight out in front of you. Hands by your side.

Abdominal Breathing

So, let us come into the here and now. Try and visualise and release areas that might hold tension: your jaw, neck, shoulders, stomach, hips. Try to physically let them drop, becoming supported by the floor, by the earth. Begin to breathe deeply. Try and visualise the lungs inflating; in, top third, middle, and then, the

very bottom of the lung, belly area, filling with air. Holding your breath for a moment or two. Then let it slowly out, all the way from the lowest part of your abdominal cavity, allowing the belly to fall towards the spine. Pause again for a moment, before inhaling deeply, top, middle, and then inflating the belly area. Hold for 1, 2, 3, then exhale slowly out, from the lowest part of your abdominal cavity, allowing the navel to fall towards the spine. Inhale to a count of 3, 1, 2, 3, hold, 1, 2, 3, exhale, 1, 2, 3, pause. Inhale to a count of 3, 1, 2, 3, hold, 1, 2, 3, exhale, 1, 2, 3, pause. Now place your hands on your belly, so your fingertips are touching, sense with your palms as the belly inflates, and deflates. Inhale, 1, 2, 3, hold, 1, 2, 3, exhale, 1, 2, 3, pause. Inhale, 1, 2, 3, hold, 1, 2, 3, exhale, 1, 2, 3, pause. Inhale, 1, 2, 3, hold, 1, 2, 3, exhale, 1, 2, 3, pause. Inflate the lumen of your intestines, the space of the tube itself. Inhale, 1, 2, 3, hold, 1, 2, 3, exhale, 1, 2, 3, pause. Inhale, 1, 2, 3, hold, 1, 2, 3, exhale, 1, 2, 3, pause. Breathe into the crevices and curves of the convolutions of your guts. Inhale, 1, 2, 3, hold, 1, 2, 3, exhale, 1, 2, 3, pause.

Leg lock

Lying on your back, legs straight, your palms face down beside your body. If you have any lower back issues you can keep your non-active leg bent with your foot on the floor. Inhale, bend your right knee up to your chest and interlock your fingers around your knee, keeping your head on the floor. Exhale, pulling your knee into your abdomen and lifting your head towards the knee. Inhale, lower your head back to the floor, keeping hold of your knee but straightening your arms. Exhale, pulling your knee into your abdomen, lifting your head towards your knee. Feel the contraction of space within your abdomen. Inhale, lower your head back to the floor, keeping hold of your knee but straightening your arms. Feel the mass of viscera squeezing together. Exhale, pulling your knee into your abdomen and lifting your head towards the knee. Inhale, lower your head back to the floor, keeping hold of your knee, straightening your arms. Exhale, knee into your abdomen, lifting your head towards your knee. Place your right leg flat on the floor, or if you have your legs bent, your foot on the floor (Shankardevananda, 2003:219).

Now let's repeat on the left. Inhale, bend your right knee up to your chest and interlock your fingers around your knee, keeping your head on the floor. Exhale, pulling your knee into your abdomen and lifting your head towards your knee. Inhale, lower your head back to the floor, keeping hold of your knee but straighten the arms. Exhale, pulling your knee into your abdomen, lifting your head towards the knee. Feel the mass of loops of your guts stimulated. Inhale, lower your head back to the floor, keeping hold of your knee, straightening your arms. Inhale new breath into your mesentery, to feed your gastrointestinal tract. Exhale, pulling your knee to your abdomen and lifting your head towards your knee. Feel the coiling of your colon convolutions. Inhale, lower your head back to the floor and keep hold of your knee, straightening the arms. Exhale, pulling your knee into your abdomen and lifting your head towards the knee (Shankardevananda, 2003:219).

Palm Tree

Standing straight with your feet slightly apart and your arms beside your side. Try and imagine there is a string pulling you from the crown of your head. Shoulders are back and down. Focus on a point at eye level, then interlock your fingers in front of your body, turning your palms down to the floor. Inhale, raising your arms in front of your body, bringing them above your head and at the same time come up onto your tip toes. Hold the stretch and balance for a couple of seconds with your breath held in, 1, 2, 3. And exhale, lowering your arms down in front of the body and bring your heels down to the floor. Inhale, raise your arms in front of your body and above your head, and come up onto your toes. Hold the stretch and balance with your breath held in, 1, 2, 3, imagining breath filling the increased space in your belly cavity. Exhale, lower the arms back down in front of your body, heels to the floor. Inhale, raise your arms in front of your body, above your head, coming up onto your toes. Hold the stretch and balance with your breath held in, 1, 2, 3. Exhale, lowering the arms and heels to the floor. Inhale, raise your arms above your head, and go up onto your toes. Hold, 1, 2, 3. Visualise the expansion of space within your intestinal folds. Exhale, lower your arms, heels to the floor. Inhale, arms above your head and onto your toes. Hold, 1, 2, 3. Exhale, lowering down, heels to the floor. Inhale, arms above your head and onto your toes. Hold, 1, 2, 3. Feel the extension between the membranes of your peritoneum and your intraperitoneal space. Exhale, lowering down, heels to the floor. Inhale, arms above your head and onto your toes. Hold, 1, 2, 3. Exhale, lowering down, heels to the floor. Inhale, arms above your head and onto your toes. Hold, 1, 2, 3. Feel a broadening of the areas amid your midriff. Exhale, lowering down, heels to the floor (Shankardevananda, 2003:233).



Image 1: Swaying Palm Tree. Photograph by Ellie Neason

Swaying Palm Tree

Standing with your feet approximately hip width apart. Make sure there is a slight bend in your knees. Once again, interlock your hands in front of your body, turning your palms down. Inhale, raise your arms above your head, palms facing up to the ceiling. Exhale, stretch from the waist to the right side. Feel the stretch in your abdomen, on both sides, breathing into the new spaces opening up around your belly organs. Inhale, come back to the centre, keeping your arms above your head and palms facing up. Exhale, sway from the waist to the left side. Inhale, coming back to centre, breathing in new breath to the dark crevices of your guts. Exhale, move from the waist to the right side. Inhale, back to centre. Exhale, sway from the waist to the left side, feeling the stretch in the side belly area, making room amidst your midriff. Inhale, back to centre. Exhale, move from the waist to the right, contracting the space of your entrails and folding the twists tighter. Inhale, back to centre. Exhale, move from your waist to the left, squeezing out the old breath from deep within your visceral folds. Inhale, back to the centre. Exhale, move from the waist to the right. Inhale, back to centre. Exhale, move from the waist to the left. Then come back to centre and lower your arms (Shankardevananda, 2003:233).

Part 2

Before we begin the exercise, please put on your coats, shoes, hats etc. We will start here in this room, and then you will continue by venturing outside. Don't forget to take your mobile phones, and maybe a bag, in case you wish to collect any physical material.

Come back to your feet. We will undertake a walking activity, venturing into the local urban landscape to conceptually and visually re-connect the idea of the gastrointestinal tract being at the same time inside the body, and part of the external environment, outside the body border. Recalling the doctrine of signatures, where it was thought that plants resembling particular areas of the body could be employed to cure ailments afflicting those parts, you will seek to perceive entrails in the world, at the same time, continuing to conjure and observe your own insides within. Drawing once again on Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter*, I challenge you to notice, photograph, collect and bring back signs, images, objects, materials out in the immediate environment that resemble, for you, the guts. It could be in a length of string, a coil of cabling, a piece of graffiti, anything.

To activate the practice, begin to walk around the room. Go slowly at first. As you are walking, try and focus fully on the contact of your feet against the floor. Can you feel the movement in your feet? Are you aware of the quality of the surface you are walking on? Is it hard or soft, warm or cold? How much of the ground can you feel beneath your footwear? What part of the foot through your shoe is in contact with the floor? Become aware of the breath in your abdomen. Can you feel your belly moving with the inhalation and exhalation of your breath? Try to connect your breath to your abdomen, to your intestines, to your guts, like we did in the earlier exercises. Now what can you see? What are you noticing? What is capturing the attention of your vision? What is making you look more closely? Can you see materials, things, images that resemble guts, intestines,

the innards of the body, your body? Carry on this practice outside for the next twenty-five minutes or so. Try not to communicate to anyone in the group, but follow your own path.¹ Be aware of where your attention goes. Notice what you are noticing. Engage what Bennett calls ‘thing-power’, allowing ‘the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle’ upon you and within you, and bring them back to share (Bennett, 2010:6).

Part 3

When participants returned to the space, we passed around phones and viewed the images they had collected, discussing what triggered their particular noticing and collecting. For example, one participant gathered images showing tree roots emerging from the earth, which they suggested, ‘put me in mind of the way in which the stomach and intestines often indicate feelings of unease which are otherwise kept “underground”,’ an awareness of which was triggered for them, during the stretching and breathing exercises (Anon., 2018).

A second, chose images of the maps of the gardens and reservoir of Drake’s Place, and photographed rain meandering and zigzagging within the mortar amid brickwork on a wall. They drew parallels between the configurations of paths and the passageways of water in the environment, and the conveyance of matter and fluids through the alimentary canal.

¹ Walking meditation adapted from artists’ book, Couch, Amanda, Hladky, Andrew, Lee, Mindy, and Nash, Richard (2015) *On Innards* | Publication Farnham: bookRoom Press



Image 2: Collected images from walking activity. Photography by anonymised participants.

Another participant perceived the whole urban environment as a consuming, processing organism, contemplating, ‘what is digested out there [in town] all day long?’ They sought out ‘scenes of digestion, of forgotten corners behind or under bushes, in otherwise meaningless corners’, focusing on ‘overlooked places of action like microscopic close-ups of the inside of the large intestines of Plymouth’. They too, drew parallels between the abdominal wall and surfaces within the urban environment.

The plastic foil covering the scaffolding of a building in construction made me think of an abdominal wall behind which intestines perform their duty of deconstructing compounds and transforming/storing them into more suitable forms of structure/energy’ (Anon., 2018).

Our Palace of Intestines

Now gather round. Close your eyes. Place your hands on your belly, and breathe in, and out. Feel the breath inflate your intestines, lifting your belly, your

diaphragm. Breathe in, and out. In, and out. In, and out. In, and out. In, and out. In, and out. In, and out. Open your eyes.

In front of participants is a large raised pie, about 35cm in diameter and 15cm tall, with *extispicy* models cast into its pastry walls. Breathe in, and out. As they rest their hands on their bellies, I too am resting mine on the belly of the pie. In, and out. Breathing in, and out. In, and out. Taking a small black-handled kitchen knife, I cut an 'opening into the invisible world' of the pie, (Naydler, 2009:168) slicing through the lid and ripping off the pastry to expose a labyrinthine sausage, the 'palace of the intestines' (Weidner, 1917:194). Counting the convolutions, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. There are 11 convolutions of the palace of the intestines. It is an odd number, and therefore, a bad omen (Starr, 1974:23).



Image 3: Amanda Couch: *Our Palace of Intestines*. Photograph by Hannah Drayson

You are now invited to ingest the pie, to undertake an examination with your proximal senses, particularly, smell and taste. We will consume what was once

inside, inside the pig as intestines, and flesh, then outside, in the abattoir, the butchers, the kitchen, then back inside, inside the body of the pie, then outside here, now, in our hands, before being swallowed, taken inside our bodies, and eventually coming outside once again, as shit.

The ancients believed in bodies ‘in common’, and through the practice of *extispicy*, this correlation between the bodies in the cosmos, human events and actions, the inside of the sacrificed creatures, and subsequently the bodies of those who consumed the animal flesh, typifies such beliefs and perspectives on the world. For example, the Greeks were a society whose practice of sacrifice was enmeshed with the culture of food. ‘For nearly ten centuries’, according to ancient Greek historian, Marcel Detienne, ‘guided by immutable cultic statutes [they] never failed to maintain relations with the divine powers through the highly ritualized killing of animal victims, which flesh was consumed collectively according to precise strictures’ (Detienne, 1989:1). He writes, ‘any military or political undertaking’ from the commencing of a war, to the opening of the *Ecclesia*, ‘must begin with a sacrifice followed by a meal’ (Detienne, 1989:3).

‘Whether we know how to eat well or not’, Haraway reminds us, ‘human and nonhuman animals are companion species, messmates at table, eating together’ (Haraway, 2007:301), which is bound up in the root of the word ‘companion’, Latin, *cum panis*, meaning, ‘with bread’ (Haraway, 2016:11). Through the act of eating, and subsequent digestion, absorption and excretion, we will continue to enact the dissolution of human-environment binaries, long after we part ways at the end of the workshop. Food that is grown in the landscape, as Shannon Sullivan writes, ‘comes “inside” the body [through eating] helps constitute the body, and the body in turn helps constitute the world “outside” it with its waste matter... and so on’ (Sullivan, 2015:67), ‘thereby establish[ing] sympoietic [a making-with] arrangement,’ as Haraway would say (2016:58).

Such vital materialism, as Bennett states, ‘raise[s] the status of the materiality of which we are composed’ (Bennett, 2010:12), or put another way, as Nietzsche wrote, levels us all, ‘a corpse is a beautiful thought for the worms’ (Nietzsche in Weineck, 2006:36).

Bibliography

- Anonymous (2018) “Re: ARWEI Conference workshop reflections and images” [Email sent to Amanda Couch, 24 April 2018].
- Anonymous (2018) “Re: Pictures1” [Email sent to Amanda Couch, 1 May 2018]
- Bennett, Jane (2010) *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham and London: Duke University Press [online] At: (Accessed on 28.04.18) <http://film.ncu.edu.tw/word/Vibrant-Matter.pdf>
- Couch, Amanda, Hladky, Andrew, Lee, Mindy, and Nash, Richard (2015) *On Innards* | Publication Farnham: bookRoom Press.
- Detienne, Marcel (1989) “Culinary Practices and the Spirit of Sacrifice” In: Detienne and Vernant (ed.) *The Cuisine of Sacrifice Among the Greeks*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pp.1-20.

- Haraway, Donna (2008) *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Haraway, Donna (2016) *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Kirksey, Eben and Helmreich, Stefan (2010) "The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography". *Cultural Anthropology*. 25 (4) pp. 545–576.
- Myers Shelton, Richard (2013) "The Babylonian Labyrinths". *Caerdroia: The Journal of Mazes and Labyrinths*. 42 pp.7-29.
- Naydler, Jeremy (2009) *The Future of the Ancient World: Essays on the History of Human Consciousness*. Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions.
- Schechner, Richard (2001) "Rasaesthetics". *TDR/The Drama Review*. 45 (3) pp. 27-50 [online] At: (Accessed 15.07.2017) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1146911>
- Shankardevananda, Swami (2003) *The Practices of Yoga for the Digestive System*. Bilhar: Yoga Publications Trust.
- Starr, Ivan (1974) "In Search of Principles of Prognostication in Extispicy". *Hebrew Union College Annual*. 45 pp. 17-23.
- Sullivan, Shannon (2015) *The Physiology of Sexist and Racist Oppression*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Temple, Robert (1995) "Superstition and Science: Ancient ways of Predicting the Future". *Odyssey*. 1 (3) pp. 60-64.
- Weidner, Ernst F. (1917) "Zur Babylonischen Eingeweideschau: Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Labyrinths" In: Hommel (ed.) *Orientalistische Studien*. Fritz Hommel zum sechzigsten Geburtstag AM 31. Juli 1914 Gewidmet Von Freunden Kollegen und Schülern. Leipzig: Hinrichs. pp. 191-198, [online] At: (Accessed on 28.04.18) <https://archive.org/stream/orientalistische0102hommuoft#page/n219/mode/2up>
- Weineck, Silke-Maria (2006) "Digesting the Nineteenth Century: Nietzsche and the Stomach of Modernity". *Romanticism*. 12 (1) pp.35-43.
- Young, Emma (2012) "Alimentary Thinking". *New Scientist*. 15 December 2012. pp. 39-42.

A PLACE OF GLOOP AS A SPACE FOR BECOMING...

Fo Hamblin

Abstract

This film explores golden syrup as an artistic material, one that is viscous, visceral, glistening, its lusciousness enveloping flesh through its sticky, sweet intensity. Developed during an artistic residency as part of *Summer Lodge* at Nottingham Trent University in July 2017, 'Gloop' was an experimental space, a darkened room, inhabited by vessels of golden gloop, where participants were invited to explore, play and discuss. Reactions ranged from disgust to delight, syrup in glorious fluid motion, oozing, slurping, spreading, transforming, travelling, becoming...looking for crevices, resisting, seeping, escaping capture. How does syrup imply action, seeking to choreograph performative movements, sounds and explorations? How can we leave the space unchanged? How can we leave unsoiled?

How can material engagement enable a process of becoming in artistic research? How can gloop embody duration and motion, provoking emergence and regeneration? 'To exist is to change...to go on creating oneself endlessly.' (Bergson, 1911:7)

Gloop as an event, was an invitation; a visceral experience; improvisational, collaborative performance; fodder for the camera; incubator for future work, an act of gathering and becoming. The space held shared, observed, and private moments, through the ebbs and flows of activity. Gloop as a film is part documentation, part experimental film, exploring the role of the digital eye and ear in looking in, capturing, obscuring experience.

Presented as a film and a paper.

Introduction

This project is a work in progress that is beginning to emerge through different forms and iterations. *Summer Lodge* was a catalyst for action, the event forming out of material play and conversation, whilst writing, film and sound are continually evolving, crossing, informing one another. The idea of becoming, especially in a Bergsonian sense, is central, we are in a continual state of becoming, and this as a project reliant on motion, playing with duration, emergence and regeneration. So, how can *Gloop* act as a conceptual framework for generative action, reflection and emergence?

Generally, I see myself as a maker, juxtaposing materials that have different qualities, resistances, and tensions. I am interested in process, and the co-constructive role materials play in developing work. I have become interested in golden syrup as an artistic material over the last couple of years, integrating it in small ways – for example used as a kind of drawing material, letting it drip down fibres and leave residues in the space. I am drawn to its sensuous qualities, and wanted to explore its possibilities further, whilst also challenging my role as a maker. What if I let the material itself drive the work in a more overt way?

So, ‘Gloop’ was an invitation, a playful provocation, to open out the potentiality of ‘gloop’, as a concept, as a multiplicity of experiences...how might different people respond to its calling?

The Event

The event was never intended as a ‘performance’, though it was a kind of installation, but not a refined or developed one, as the idea developed only a few days before the event. As the ethos of Summer Lodge promotes sharing, invitations, open provocations, the atmosphere created an opportunity to invite people to play with *stuff*, and in particular, *gloopy* stuff. The idea of creating an event seemed somehow formal though, a ‘thing’...something that perhaps seems formed or developed. For Bergson, a thing might be seen as ‘immobile’, although he is clear to note that this is in fact an illusion, as in ‘matter and memory’, he ponders, ‘how should *progress* coincide with a *thing*, a movement with an immobility?’ (Bergson 2016[1911]: 133)

I realised that an ‘event’ as a ‘thing’, could be seen in a similar way as I see an artist’s relationship with materials. It is not about imposing a finished idea upon materials, we *go with them*, following the fluxes and flows of their forces. This relates to Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts of multiplicity and rhizomes (2013 [1987]),...patterns of action are not about tracing a route, defining a beginning and end, or having defined choices; an artist cannot control but connect and interact, to form new potentials. This idea of potentiality is taken on by Tim Ingold:

Making...is a process of correspondence: not the imposition of preconceived form on raw material substance, but the drawing out or bringing forth of potentials immanent in a world of becoming...
(Ingold, 2013:31)

So, Gloop was an experiment, with a focus on body-material exploration, an open set of possibilities, one that I hoped would provide fodder for film and for future work, whether this be in the form of physical, made ‘things’, sound, or collaborative possibilities for performance and digital moving image. However, its main aim was to provoke material engagement, without pre-conditions, set ideas or outcomes. O’Sullivan states that,

Art...might be understood as the name for a function: a magical, an aesthetic function of transformation. Art is less involved in making sense of the world, and more involved in exploring the possibilities of being—or of becoming—in the world. (O’Sullivan, in Andrews and O’Sullivan, 2013: 20)

Space / Place

In creating a space as the nucleus for activity, we had an incubator, a place with particular conditions to enable growth. Darkness seemed important, to enable a focussing on and in the material, to draw out its ‘glistening’ through narrowly focussed light sources, controlled in part by participants. Light came from an overhead projector, a couple of projected film experiments, and torches, sometimes immersed within the syrup, focussing the eye, blocking and obscuring the ‘in between’ spaces. Tanizaki talks of the beauty and value of darkness in traditional Japanese dwellings, in his essay ‘in praise of shadows’, noting,

A phosphorescent jewel gives off its glow and color in the dark and loses its beauty in the light of day. Were it not for shadows, there would be no beauty. (Tanizaki, 2001[1977]:46)

From another viewpoint, Nicholas Royle, in his book, ‘the uncanny’, talks of the relationship between what is hidden and what is revealed in Freud’s essay *Das Unheimliche* (1919),

Darkness is at least implicitly involved in the crucial definition of the uncanny that Freud takes from Schelling: the *unheimlich* or uncanny is what “ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light”(U, p.345)...it is not so much darkness itself...but...the process of revelation or bringing to light that is uncanny. (Royle, 2003:108)

He goes on to talk about Paul de Man’s view of important literary texts coming out of a combination of blindness and insight. This points to the value of *unknowing*, perhaps as a route to knowledge, and the inseparable nature of seemingly opposing forces. Following Freud’s focus on repressed desires, perhaps

Gloop might be seen as a kind of ritual or therapy, allowing us to remember our inner child, before we became infected by rules and expectation?! Or does it bring out our repressed understanding of our *own material nature*, our bodily tensions and visceral sensibilities? The idea of the ritualistic is tempting, but it is a term used too carelessly, romanticised; therapy in this form too hierarchical, too reductive, rather than *material as potential* for drawing out a complex web of oscillating forces.



Fig 1: Golden Syrup on overhead projector.

Place

In terms of the Gloop space being a particular kind of 'place', you could say that a sense of collectivity was present, provided by the framework of the *Summer Lodge*. 'Participants' included studio assistants, who are current fine art students, fellow *summer lodge* artists, as well as academics and technicians from my department and beyond. Some stayed at the door looking in, but refusing to set foot inside. Some came in but were tentative, aware that the level of engagement and stickiness may interrupt or work against their own ideas or plans for the day. Others were engaged with the material for a period of time. Patterns of activity seemed to me, a kind of act of gathering and becoming – an experience together, apart, opposed, and yet an emerging collaborative performance.

Non-action

Those that engaged more visibly clearly made it into the film more than those who didn't, but what about those who stood on the edges, did not visibly act? What about the importance of non-action, and non-*doing*? This is surely significant (marks on a 'map' of the event, perhaps), but how might it be revealed? Does it further intensify the activity within, or is each viewpoint indifferent to the other? Non-action may be a statement of disgust or dis-interest, and what, then of non-becoming? It would be interesting to create a map for the patterns of activity (or indeed non-action) within and on the edge of the space,¹ to see how pace and levels of interaction can be seen as a visual – kinaesthetic schema for 'Gloop', perhaps?

Social space – patterns of action

The shape, pattern and rhythm of the work then, was framed by levels of activity within the space. I was interested in the energy of the space, how it changed between highly active, buzzing and fun, to meditative and immersive, a site of discussion or interrogation, or solitary, reflective quietness. Participants engaged in personal explorations and dialogues with the material itself, perhaps focussing on one particular bowl or space, slowly moving, at the same time as others were playfully provoking it, laughing and delighting in its absurdity. Different paces of activity were apparent alongside one another. During this initial active phase, the space quickly changed as gloop seeped out from the boundaries of the bowls and tubs, so it was no longer possible to tread *between* spaces without becoming attached to the floor, or indeed, 'soiled'. It was impossible to stand still on the floor where the syrup lay. What this created, as the space became inhabited by a single visitor at a time (alongside myself), was a space for more lengthy dialogue, a way to almost perform a discussion, to be moving, as another moves, to draw out rhythms, to be engaged in a sensory, mobile act whilst verbally exploring ideas. This leads me to think of Bergson's 'pure mobility', duration as a continually evolving present, building on the past but never repeating without change.

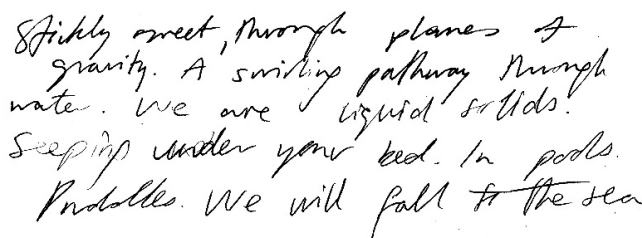
Moments of reflection and pause are useful however, here lies a tension between trying to articulate or consolidate an idea, and yet leave it as an open set of possibilities. Bergson states, 'Our perception manages to solidify into discontinuous images the fluid continuity of the real.' (Bergson, 1944[1911]:328)

The Text

The word gloop itself is evocative of the action or movement of syrup or viscous substances, a kind of onomatopoeia, even if through its imagined sound – the word can be drawn out...g-l-o-o-p...so it inevitably provokes at a cross-sensory level of perception.

¹ see Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, to consider the rhizome as a map and not a tracing, a map being 'susceptible to constant modification'(2013 [1987]: 12), performative, rather than a pre-ordained route.

I wanted to see what people's responses would be to the idea of Gloop, without thinking too much about it so I requested visitors to the space to write for one minute before and after entering the space to capture immediate thoughts, anything they could think of in relation to *Gloop*, a kind of free writing exercise. The writings formed a way of capturing a private moment, exploring abstract or visceral responses, associations with the word itself. They were playful, ridiculous, thoughtful, melancholic, abstract, poetic....



Stickily sweet, through planes of
gravity. A swirling pathway through
water. We are liquid solids.
Sleeping under your bed. In pools.
Probably. We will fall to the sea

Fig 2: Anonymous free writing for GLOOP event

The fact that the writings were anonymous, gave the handwriting a kind of aura, an imagined character of gloop itself perhaps. But, as soon as these texts were vocalised for the film, they changed in nature from the uninhibited, scrawled, free writings, each building its own character and weight, sometimes simply read from a page, other times becoming more animated, building a kind of narrative. Bringing others in to respond to either the written text, the moving image, or simply the idea of gloop, evolved the original material and gave new dimensions to the image, playing with directed or potential 'readings', and essentially bringing it back to the body.

The Film

The film was intended as part documentary, part experimental film, made in collaboration with Jonathan Hamilton, who filmed the event. (see <https://vimeo.com/jonathanhamilton>). The aim was to capture the event as 'a thing' but use the editing process as a way to dissect, disrupt, and reorganise the material as a way of reflecting upon it, whilst creating new potential and directions. I saw the film making process as a mouthpiece, if you like, for regeneration and emergence, aided by alternative viewpoints, interpretations, tendencies and set of technical competencies brought by Jonathan.

The camera allows a particular framework for observation, zooming in, zooming out, actively capturing and following flows of movement and space. It has its own choreographic language, working with and intersecting the choreographic actions of movement and material. Editing the film builds patterns and layers, each new iteration building its own sense of choreography, which builds on repetition whilst

continually flipping backwards and forwards in time. The timeline builds upwards, downwards, stretching and compressing as we work on it, the process and resultant form playing with pace, rhythm, direction and duration.

What about the result, or at least its potential aim? How might film provoke bodily sensations or a sense of delight or disgust? How do we engage the visceral through the digital? Can the film be *perceived* as a regeneration of the event, feeding off its own material whilst generating new possibilities? Rhythms emerge, sounds and images intersect, as they converge and go out of sync. This way of developing patterns provoke what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as assemblages and collisions (2013 [1987]), each informing and changing one another. How might we build on this to cross between making, observing, writing, performing, constructing and engaging, through different modes of art practice and collaboration?

How can *material* drive interaction and performative possibilities and feed the camera,
and,
how might text and image feed sound,
and,
how can recorded sounds reframe the moving image,
and.....

According to Alfred North Whitehead,

It lies in the nature of things that the many enter into complex unity' and that this unity is one of unrepeatable combinations, that itself is a 'creative advance into novelty. (Whitehead 1929, in Sherburne, 1966: 35)

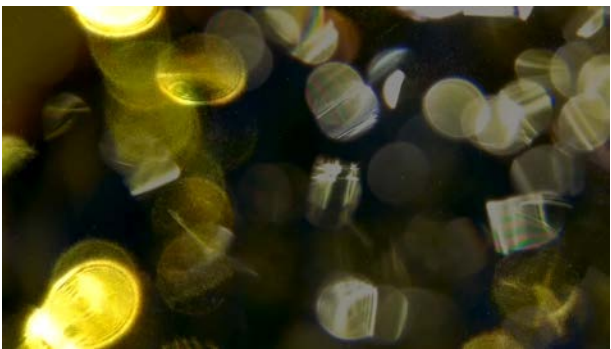


Fig 3: Film still: GLOOP. Golden syrup in water.

And...this inevitably continually evolves ...some collisions need to be revealed and shared in order to pause, consolidate, before embarking on new iterations and opening up to further potentiality. Whitehead poses experience as a

‘conrescence’ but one that drives continually interconnected novelty and perpetual change (see Whitehead 1929, in Sherburne, 1966).



Fig 4: Film still: GLOOP.

Material-Body

So, to come back to the material itself...Why *is* syrup, or gloop so pertinent for a notion of becoming? It has the ability to transform, its fluid motion oozing, spreading, resisting, seeping, escaping capture. Its translucency provides porous boundaries, responding to light, enveloping, emitting, reflecting light. It has a *vibrant materiality*, as explored by Jane Bennett (Bennett, 2010). Its motion and changeability provides ripe fodder for emergent practices and explorations, it is hard to control, but invites action, provoking, seeking to choreograph movements. (Bergson, 2016 [1911]). Some enjoyed playing with slow, fluid movements, whilst others enjoyed squeezing, scraping, almost kneeding it, to oxygenate it, changing its qualities...and still others tried in vein to resist its sliding. All had to engage in movement of some kind, even if to keep away. Its slimy and sticky qualities invoke disgust or delight as a tactile experience; it is hard to remove from the body, it becomes ingrained, in fingernails, hair, between the toes; it permeates, or as Bergson would say, it *endures*.

You may delight in the taste or find it ‘sickly sweet’, with its overpowering scent. In addition, sugar has a relationship with desire, a craving, something perhaps forbidden, and with its own cultural history. It has a significance as food, we can literally ingest it, after which it becomes entwined with our bodily cycles, and Bennett discusses this to blur the lines between external and internal, inert matter and *life*.

The activity of metabolization, whereby the outside and inside mingle and recombine, renders...plausible the idea of a vital materiality. It reveals the swarm of activity subsisting below and within formed bodies and recalcitrant things, a vitality obscured by our conceptual habit of dividing the world into inorganic matter and organic life. (Bennett, 2010: 50)

We can, then, explore the body as the site of emergence, through visceral, material engagement. We can see that multiple forms and approaches feed one another, but how is this useful outside its own cycle of consumption? What if we become more open to the possibility that knowledge is gained through connectivity, that body, material and environment act in symbiotic, organic, rhizomatic relationships? How might we develop a kind of philosophy of gloom, a concept that has the ability to spread and seep into other areas of understanding and practice?

Bibliography

- Andrews, J and O'Sullivan, S. (2013) *Visual Cultures as Objects and Affects*. London: Goldsmiths, University of London and Sternberg Press.
- Bennett, J. (2010) *Vibrant Matter: a political ecology of things*. London: Duke University Press.
- Bergson, H. (1944[1911]) *Creative Evolution*. Translated by Arthur Mitchell. New York: Random House, Inc.
- Bergson, H. (2016[1911]) *Matter and Memory*. Colorado: Random Shack.
- Deleuze and Guattari (2013 [1987]) *A Thousand Plateaus*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Ingold, T. (2013) *Making: anthropology, archaeology, art and architecture*. London: Routledge.
- Royle, N. (2003) *The uncanny*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Sherburne, D, ed. (1966) *A Key to Whitehead's Process and Reality*. London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Tanizaki, J. (2001[1977]) *in praise of shadows*. London: Vintage Books.
- Online: Jonathan Hamilton on vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/jonathanhamilton>

HETEROTOPIAS— OPTICAL MASTICATION AND SPACIAL RECONFIGURATION

Noa Kaplan and Szilvia Ruszev

Abstract

The following is the script from a performance lecture called ‘Four Approaches to the Journal’. It was developed and performed by Myna Trustram, Per Roar, Camilla Graff Junior and Luisa Greenfield first at the Nordic Summer University in Sauðárkrókur, Iceland, on 27 July, 2014, and then at the Society for Artistic Research annual conference at the University of Plymouth, UK, on 13 April, 2018. The script combines simultaneous journal writing with written and transcribed conversations that took place over a five-week period from our respective locations: Manchester, Oslo, Berlin, Berkeley and Tallinn. Ostensibly, the conversations were about the role of text in our various art practices. However, as they developed, notions of place and the persistence of history (individual and shared) became ever more present. The performance moved through various forms of representation, converging at the intertwined realms of fiction and documentary.

Introduction

The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible. (Foucault, 1984)

This quote became the anchor for our exploration. Michel Foucault’s lecture anatomizes the idea of the heterotopia, defined as a space that is both real and virtual, physical and mental. Heterotopias are neither utopias nor dystopias, they are spaces defined by otherness, which function in non-hegemonic conditions. We followed Foucault’s attempt to develop a heterotopology as we formed our own workflow in virtual reality. Our virtual reality experience, combines numerous spaces, including a well, a theater, a garden, a cemetery, and a mirror room. These spaces, central to Foucault’s discussion, are made virtually inhabitable. Through experimentation, we observed that virtual reality itself functions as a heterotopia in so far as it allows for this type of juxtaposition of spaces.

When we embarked on this exploratory research project, neither of us had experience working with virtual reality. We found ourselves in the dark; we didn’t know where we were headed. Fittingly, the first perspective we constructed was from the bottom of a well. Gradually the viewer is drawn upward toward the light and more complex configurations of space. To

generate more content we set out with a Jaunt camera and captured a range of spaces in Los Angeles. Each one was chosen because of its exemplary status in Foucault's lecture. As we moved in the city and read and reread the translation of his lecture our understanding of its meaning transformed.



Figure 1 Prototype of installation (© Szilvia Ruszev + Noa Kaplan)

Sound plays a vital role in *Heterotopias*. Releasing any narrative scaffolding, we aimed to build an experience that sets up an intimate and explorative relationship with the audiovisual content. The voice over combines the

clips from the recording of Foucault's original lecture with translations into English by Jay Misowiec; whispered voices utter insights throughout the experience. In the first scene, the voices function as guides, but as the experience progresses, they become increasingly ambient. The voices fade from semantic to purely rhythmic elements. Using the potentialities of 360° spatialization, the sound design aims to alter the user's perspective on how narration occupies space.

In *Heterotopias*, physical furniture transforms the way that users experience visuals and sound (Figure 1). Before putting on the head mounted display, each user sits in a hanging chair. The immediate result is a sense of weightlessness. The body's gentle motion mediates the camera motion and audio attenuation. Additionally, we have received extensive user feedback that the absence of a virtual representation of the body feels natural as the user's feet are not planted firmly on the ground. The hanging chair alters the proprioception of the user. Once comfortable, he or she has precise control over the amplitude of movement, facilitating the body's self-assertion into the virtual space of *Heterotopias*.

Foucault's lecture situates social theory in the context of geographic analysis. He discusses the difficulty of producing a systematic description, or heterotopology, of heterotopias. Our artistic approach in creating this virtual reality essay is an experimental one, based on our understanding of art as a reflexive practice, as an independent form to produce aesthetic knowledge. Our aim was to create an aesthetically driven heterotopology where each user's encounter with Foucault's theory is mediated, even constructed, by that user's particular body.

Ritual Entry

Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable. In general, the heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public place. Either the entry is compulsory, as in the case of entering a barracks or a prison, or else the individual has to submit to rites and purifications. (Foucault, 1984)

To experience virtual reality, the viewer must perform certain rituals of entry, strapping on a head mounted display, donning headphones, and in our case sitting in a hanging chair. The viewer, blindfolded and suspended, becomes vulnerable to the outside.

Tangentially, we became interested in the often ignored suite of products that have been created as part of the virtual reality purification rites. For instance, sanitary masks, which we initially offered viewers. We also discovered a range of cleansing wipes and sprays to alleviate fears of contagion. While virtual reality sometimes feels isolated and remote, in an

exhibition setting, the apparatus is in actuality a series of shared surfaces, which collect layers of bodily residue.

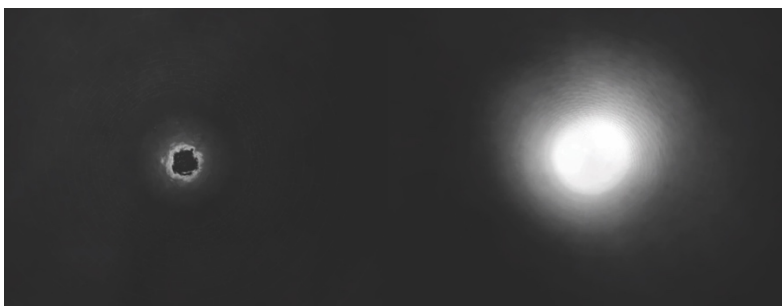


Figure 2 The Well (© Szilvia Ruszev + Noa Kaplan)

These somewhat absurd products lead us to consider other types of rituals related to the eyes, the most essential being the act of blinking: blinking keeps the eye lubricated and removes irritants from the surface. Foucault's description takes on new meaning in the context of the blink:

To get in one must have a certain permission and make certain gestures. Moreover, there are even heterotopias that are entirely consecrated to these activities of purification—purification that is partly religious and partly hygienic.

(Foucault, 1984)

We often forget about this ritual, as our minds edit out our blinks to create a continuous flow of perception. With the exception of assistive technologies, new eye tracking applications (particularly in virtual reality) tend to designate blinks as 'noise' in the system; blinks are considered a waste of space, so this information is expelled from the database. In our case, however, blinking is the primary mode of interaction.

Blinking as Optical Mastication

Outside and inside form a dialectic of division, the obvious geometry of which blinds us as soon as we bring it into play in metaphorical domains. It has the sharpness of the dialectics of yes and no, which decides everything.

(Foucault, 1984)

Heterotopias is built for the experimental FOVE head-mounted display, which enables eye-tracking. Usually, users' blinks are considered 'noise' in the system, additional data that is edited out. In our case, however, blinking is the primary mode of interaction. With the increasing precision of

infrared sensors, even unconscious blinks, lasting around 300-400 milliseconds can be reliably separated. In *Heterotopias*, each blink triggers a new arrangement of visual and sonic elements; consequently, space is continually redefined on all sides. The user unconsciously performs the cognitive work of assembling the audiovisual experience, turning the concept of montage upside down.

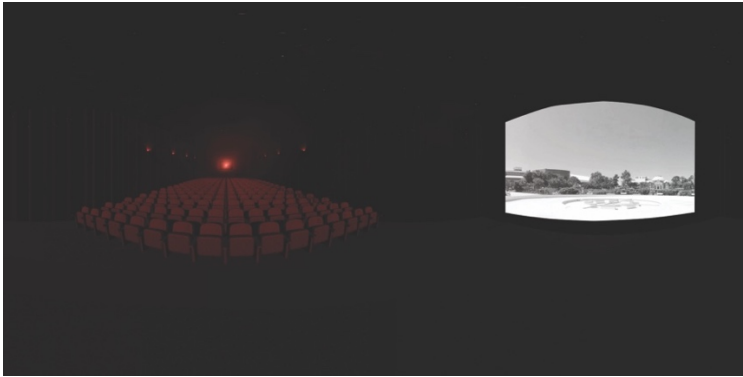


Figure 3 The Cinema and The Garden (© Szilvia Ruszev + Noa Kaplan)

In *Heterotopias*, the blinking interaction forces users to passively (or actively) control the configuration of spaces. One notable observation from testing this interactive mechanism is that many users did not realize that their blinking was shaping the experience unless explicitly told. Once told, however, blinking, normally invisible or imperceptible, became the focal point of the experience.

Through research, we learned that there are three types of blinks: Spontaneous blinking occurs without external stimuli or internal effort. This type of blinking is conducted in the premotor brain stem and happens without conscious effort, like breathing and digestion. A reflexive blink occurs in response to an external stimulus, such as contact with the cornea or objects that appear rapidly in front of the eye. A voluntary blink has a larger amplitude and makes use of all three divisions of the orbicularis oculi muscle. Voluntary blinks are far less common than spontaneous and reflexive blinks.

Interestingly, users who were not told about the interactive mechanism, reported that they did not know their blinking triggered change. Their blinks were spontaneous and reflexive; however, those who were told of the mechanism ahead of time, blinked voluntarily and reported that they were hyper-aware of their blinks over the course of the entire ten-minute experience.

Experiencing the Virtual Tract

The user enters *Heterotopias* at the bottom of a well. The effects of blinking are most subtle here, simply changing the sonic quality of dripping water. When the narrative countdown starts, the user starts to move up toward the opening of the well, ultimately dissolving into total whiteness.

In the second scene, the whiteness resolves into a beam of light emanating from a projector in a movie theater. When the user turns, there is an image of a garden on the screen. The user can switch (by blinking) between the site of the cinema, where the garden is a projection, and the garden itself. This scene alternates between confinement and freedom, illusion and awareness of the world.

The cinema is a very odd rectangular room, at the end of which, on a two-dimensional screen, one sees the projection of a three-dimensional space. The garden is the smallest parcel of the world and then it is the totality of the world.
(Foucault, 1984)

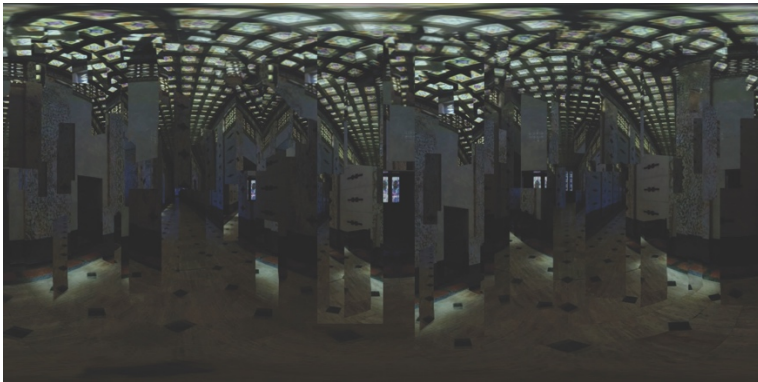


Figure 4 The Mirror Room (© Szilvia Ruszev + Noa Kaplan)

The experience concludes in a mausoleum filled with mirrors—a virtual space composed of both 360° cinematic footage and CG mirrors—referring both to the real and the simulacra. In this space, blinking alters the number and position of the virtual mirrors that surround the user. The ever-changing mirrors create cognitive dissonance; the user is never given the opportunity to comprehend the space in its wholeness. The mirror room is the end of the journey, bringing the user back to the dark and intimate space of the self.

In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see

myself there where I am absent: such is the utopia of the mirror. (Foucault, 1984)

Conclusion

Ultimately, *Heterotopias* asserts that virtual reality fulfills the criteria of Foucault's 'other spaces'. In fact, it extends his heterotopology to digital space. The physical site of experience is visually replaced, and in the case of *Heterotopias*, even the sensation of solid ground underfoot vanishes. The body adapts to an unfamiliar, suspended experience. Most importantly, the blinking interaction reminds the user that each body has the potential to shape space, consciously or unconsciously.

If we look at the body as the constitutive source of our world experience, concepts like "internal" and "external", "subject" and "object" become nothing but verbal placeholders for the dynamic relation our body entertains with the world.

(Gallese, 2017)

Bibliography

Foucault, M., (October 1984) Des Espaces Autres (Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias), *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité*, no. 5, p. 46–49.; translated by J. Miskowiec, (Spring, 1986), *Diacritics* 16, no. 1, p. 22–27.

Gallese, V., (2017) "*Visions of the Body: Embodied Simulation and Aesthetic Experience*" Accessed August 11, 2017.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317344886_Visions_of_the_Body_Embodied_Simulation_and_Aesthetic_Experience

APPROACHING THE MATERIAL-DISCURSIVE VORTEX

Roman Kirschner

Abstract

Against the backdrop of discussions around New Materialisms, art-based research can provide a rich expertise in linking the material and the discursive realm through a combined conceptual and practical approach. Its inventiveness in the field of methods suggests that it can be a good source for finding productive ways of confronting the „material-discursive vortex“ and immersing oneself in it. This paper presents specific methods, their open-ended development and their application from within the plastic arts. These methods were used to collectively explore and evolve multiple interwoven layers of understanding and working with „stuff“, especially focussing on material performances and activities. The mentioned layers span from intimate studio work to shared bodily experiences, collective contextualizations in contemporary discourses and further to the wider networks of materiality. The presented insights and examples are drawn from recent art-based research projects and theoretical-practical seminars.

There are different claims of how material configurations and the mental realm work together. This relationship can become especially relevant when discussing issues of materiality – e.g. when investigating different layers of material configurations like formation processes, the wider networks of spatial, historical and cultural contexts, or the relations to other knowledge areas that influence the present situation.

When dealing with the relationship between the material and the mental, one quickly feels the strong pull of a vortex, which leads to a meandering in different depths around questions such as: What does a specific material configuration or property possibly mean? How exactly is this meaning created? Is it only important to me? Is the meaning more important than the material configuration? Can it exist independently? Do meanings need rooting in the material realm? Or are meaning and matter in a way the same? What is the role of the material, the body, the mental pre-formation in processes of material signification? Are such processes rather approached with the help of theoretical frameworks or through direct bodily interaction?

In this short paper I can of course not provide satisfying answers to all of these questions, but in order to help approaching them, I would like to introduce two viable theoretical positions. First, I want to bring back into memory the currently popular position by Karen Barad concerning what she considers the ‘material-discursive’. Thereupon I will present a less known concept by David Bohm called ‘soma-significance’.

Finally, I will introduce some collective methods used in art-based research to jump into the loops of the ‘material-discursive’ and ‘soma-significance’ with the hope of being able to use them in a fruitful way.

Barad’s ‘material-discursive process’

The relationship between the material and the discursive is one of mutual entailment. Neither is articulated or articulable in the absence of the other; matter and meaning are mutually articulated. Neither discursive practices nor material phenomena are ontologically or epistemologically prior. Neither can be explained in terms of the other. Neither has privileged status in determining the other. (Barad 2003, p. 822)

In this explanation, Barad claims that the material and the discursive express each other, but they are not the same. They shall have a close relationship with each other. They are supposed to be different aspects—but aspects of what? Barad doesn’t seem to be very clear in this passage. Also, she uses discourse and meaning more or less as synonyms. She brings them too close to each other. ‘Discourse’, she writes earlier in the same text, ‘is that which constrains and enables what can be said. Discursive practices define what counts as meaningful statements.’ (Barad 2003, p. 819) So, They are not meaning as such. Nevertheless, we can maybe agree for now, that matter and meaning are somehow entangled and that discursive practices continuously reconfigure the material world and are as such ‘always already material’. (Barad 2003, p. 822)

Bohm’s ‘soma-significance’

An earlier account of how matter and meaning are inseparable poles of the same flow was presented by theoretical physicist and philosopher David Bohm. He introduced the notion of ‘soma-significance’, where soma stands for anything physical like e.g. body, environment, particle, etc. and significance for meaning. He explains that like in a magnetic field, these two poles can’t be broken apart but constitute the points of passage of a constant flow, that is continuously present. To describe it a bit further in his own words:

[...] nothing exists in this process except as a two-way movement, a flow of energy, in which meaning is carried inward and outward between the aspects of soma and significance, as well as between levels that are relatively subtle and those that are relatively manifest. (Bohm 2003, p. 164)

Subtle in this context describes something that is finely woven, like e.g. meanings are woven together and enfolded in each other. And the *manifest* literally stands for what can be held in the hand, the tactile. The inward and outward movement he is talking about can e.g. be understood as the transmission of a perception into the body and brain via physical and chemical processes. Through these processes states and structures are changed and eventually lead to an outward movement, muscle stimulation and somatic activity that also leads to external change.

On yet another level of explanation, Bohm proposed a scheme in which he argued for the unity in the mutual enfolding of matter, energy and meaning. He pointed out that ‘there is only one flow, and a change of meaning is a change in that flow. Therefore any change of meaning is a change of soma, and any change of soma is a change of meaning.’ (Bohm 2003, p. 163)

What is interesting to note is that Bohm explicitly considers the perception and integration of new meanings as creative acts. The integration of new meanings do not only exert some influence on other meanings by reorganization and consequent enfoldings. But through the change of the overall constellation of meanings they also find a way of expressing this change on the somatic level. Thus, a new meaning expresses itself in changes of the mental as well as the physical situation (including body and environment) with unforeseeable further consequences.

But what does all this mean for the arts? How does this influence the arts’ diverse accounts of materiality which have shifted more into the public attention during the last years and especially during the discussions around speculative realism and new materialisms?

Are the discursive practices of the sciences the same as those of the arts? What about the awareness of these two disciplines of soma-significance? In the arts, the implicit awareness of soma-significant processes seems to be widely spread. Concerning the material-discursive, there seem to be quite some different approaches around.

Methods used in ‘Material Aktiv Denken’

In the art-based research project ‘Liquid Things’ and especially in a workshop called ‘Material Aktiv Denken’ we tried to consciously apply and take advantage of the concepts presented so far.¹ Let me briefly give you some insights into a few methods that have been used.

The workshop took place in 2013 in collaboration with the research group ‘Enactive Environments’ at the Zurich University of the Arts.² ‘Material Aktiv Denken’ is a suitable example because of the double meaning of its title in german. First, it means ‘to think materials as active entities’, and second, it means ‘to think actively with materials about materials’. This second meaning adds performativity to materials and underlines the embodiment and material basis of thinking itself – be it in practices or interactions and it emphasizes the need for direct and personal experiences.

For this event we invited participants from various fields like e.g. Philosophy, Art, art theory, architecture, design and material sciences. We made sure from the beginning that we do not deal with materials without the materials themselves – be it in the form of stuff, materials, things or material systems etc. In order to make this group work together in a sufficiently unhierarchic way and without borders of disciplines, and to really merge material and conceptual processes, we had to come up with special conditions and activities.

To jump into this complex field of our topic and to avoid roles rooted in different disciplines, we invited everybody to bring a representative material with active properties to introduce themselves with. This way, we achieved a start that involved everybody in direct material experiences. To give you an impression about these materials: The participants brought stuff as diverse as e.g. the leafs of a tree, photonic crystals, petrified sea urchins, chocolate clouds, silly putty, electroluminescent foils, paper, a printed photograph and glowing sugar. On the second day of the workshop we came back to this material and gave every participant an opportunity to make his or her material act. This resulted in a very interesting situation. On the first day, the materials were often described and categorized as being raw stuff, an explicit material or an object. On the second day, when the materials were supposed to act, this distinction disappeared completely. While on the first day the activity of the materials was not so specifically treated, the second day mercilessly showed what the materials were

¹ The project Liquid Things (2012-2016) was funded by the Austrian Science Fund in the framework of PEEK.

² A more in-depth description of the workshop can be found in Frantinovic (2017).

able to do – unless the activity took place in another time frame and the presented material entity was only the result of a longer active process.



Fig. 1: Participants letting their materials act and/or telling their stories.

Another method that we used was called ‘Extended-Conceptual-Speed-Dating’. Initially, this is a method by Brian Massumi and Erin Manning that makes people discuss a text quickly in ever changing couples. For our purpose we changed quite some important factors. The initial setup of people discussing in couples was kept, but this doesn’t happen in a circle but at a long table. This table we covered with a huge piece of paper on which the participants were supposed to draw, make notes or use or position additional objects/stuff. Like in the original version we set a strict time limit for the discussions – in our case 8 mins. After one period, the participants on one side of the table had to move over one seat to face a new person and the conversations started over, dealing with the exact same topic. The stationary participants used white markers while their mobile partners each used a distinctive color. Each individual conversation left traces on the paper surface and those traces were used to influence and facilitate the following conversation. This way, the individual backgrounds and selective perceptions of each participant in combination with changing partners were interlinked. The discussions reached a high intensity because of the described circumstances and were even more energetic due to the limited time frame. The interwoven flows of discussions were later reconstructed by the whole group through the traces and specific colors used on the surface.

From our workshop reader – which included texts by Karen Barad, Jane Bennett, Manuel DeLanda, Alfred Gell, J. J. Gibson, Tim Ingold, Lambros Malafouris, Brian Massumi, Jens Soentgen and Hans Peter Hahn, Andrew Pickering and Pieter-Paul Verbeek – we chose two: Tim Ingold’s ‘Bringing things to life: Creative Entanglements in a world of materials’ (Ingold, 2010) and Lambros

Malafouris' 'At the Potter's Wheel: An Argument for Material Agency' (Malafouris, 2008). These two were discussed and processed against each other. The Extended-Conceptual-Speed-Dating-session marked a very intense point of reference for the whole workshop. All further activities and experiments necessarily related to this collective experience.



Fig. 2: Diagrams/Notes of the Extended-Conceptual-Speed-Dating session (left) and participants reconstructing the conversations (right).

Another exercise was based on a Spaces-and-Actions-Matrix also involving some speed-dating features. With this exercise we tried to extend the fields of associations, situations and stories. At different moments of the workshop, we already took time to let the materials' stories evolve. For example in the introduction or when we let materials act and of course during innumerable experiments which can't be described here. Together with all participants we composed a matrix of different locations and actions. In couples the participants had to choose two written dimensions: one location and one activity, in addition to a third one, given by a material physically present on a table between them. Through this third dimension the Spaces-and-Actions-Matrix was a very powerful extension to how this matrix approach was usually performed. Our participants had to sketch or describe imaginary stories by drawing or with few words involving the three dimensions on a piece of paper and put it back onto the matrix on the board. After ten minutes, participants would switch to another combination of dimensions, a new material and a new brainstorming partner.

When the matrix was fully populated, each participant presented his or her favorite story to the group.



Fig. 3: Participant explaining some results after Spaces-and-Actions-Matrix-Activity.

This short insight into a few used methods hopefully rendered them understandable in the sense that they were opened up for adaption to different needs, topics and situations. And hopefully the short explanations showed how the material and the mental were used as a whole to negotiate the topic of material activity. Luckily the ambiguity and openness of this term was preserved by not killing it with an ultimate definition.

Bibliography

- Barad, K. (2003) "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter". *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. vol. 28, no. 3.
- Bohm, D. (2003) "Soma-significance and the activity of meaning". In Nichol, L. ed., *The Essential David Bohm*. London: Routledge, pp. 158-182.
- Franinovic, K. (2017) "Material Aktiv Denken". In Kirschner R. ed., *Raw*

Flows. Fluid Mattering in Arts and Research, Berlin: De Gruyter, pp. 124-143.

Ingold, T. (2010) *Bringing Things to Life: Creative Entanglements in a World of Materials*.
Available from:

http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/1306/1/0510_creative_entanglements.pdf [Accessed
1st May 2018].

Malafouris, L. (2008) "At the Potter's Wheel. An Argument for Material Agency".

In: Knappett, C./Malafouris, L. eds., *Material Agency. Towards a Non-Anthropocentric Approach*. New York: Springer, pp. 19-36.

MONSTROUS AGENCIES

Karolina Kucia

Abstract

The monstrosity is improper, without property, inappropriate but perhaps inappropriate/d (Trinh Minh-Ha). It lives in the space between not yet and too much already. Paper problematises the question of singular authorship and ownership, proposing instead a mutation and distortions within a frame of an extended monstrous collaboration of machines/tools, human skills and procedures as well as the awkwardness of glitches and incompatibilities within them and between them. As a starting point, I propose a comparison of parasitism (Serres) with monstrosity (Haraway, Cohen, Davies). Parasitism is a structure of transforming common to private, through introducing an inappropriate gesture. That necessary profanity paradoxically opens private, corporeal reality to the realm of the certain idea of “public”, by the gesture of purification, introducing a system of values. Monstrosity, on the other hand, dwells in the double realm of partial and combined bodies; science fiction or speculative future. This performatively written paper unfolds the examples of organisational models of authorship and co-production alongside two stories: tapeworm used as a slimming cure in the early 1900s and vagina dentata, feminine monstrous and animalistic organ-companion as a complex and contested conjunction of fantasies of power, fear and capturing uncontrollable. Monstrous can still live, animate and mutate pre-given representation, remaining unable to represent itself. Who are ‘we’? ... It is a remonstrative question (Haraway), where monstrosity is pointing, revealing, but also objecting. It is a performance, a display of already a deformity, an object of the human condition and its forming forces, a cure from malade of ignorance (Kritzman). According to Esa Kirkkopelto [...] artistic research not only takes place in institutions, but it should also conduct research on them, take institutions as its object. Monstrous Agencies is a proposal of an analytic and organisational tool for re-articulation of authorship, procedures and institutions of artistic production; it gives agency to monstrosity and monstrosity to agency.

(Standing next to the blue chair - Figure 1)



Figure 1

Large blue [...] butterflies [...] are the best-known example of parasitic myrmecophily, and they exhibit a high degree of host-ant specificity. Early instar caterpillars feed on specific host plants [...] When they reach the fourth instar, they drop from their host plant to the ground and gain entry to a nest of *Myrmica* ants (Myrmicinae) by using chemical mimicry to cause themselves to be recognized as ant larvae by worker ants, who then carry them into their nest. [...] Once they gain entry into an ant nest, the caterpillars grow by exploiting the resources of the ant colony. [They] uses two parasitic strategies: “predatory” caterpillars prey on the ant brood, and “cuckoo” caterpillars are fed by the ants via regurgitation. (Ueda, 2016)

What if we imagine that in knowledge production, there are no communal meals? What if, with the flow of nutrition, there is not a common that is produced but an undeniable power structure of one directional growth on one side and decrease on the other? As not only one meal is served, many of those one directional flows, where one chews on relation to another, become a complex system of relations to relations – a knowledge production, the labour structure and a body/mind of the labourer. Becoming self after self, myself, yourself, ourselves and themselves is a life-long task and responsibility that, potentially, results in exhaustion and inadequateness (Ehrenberg, 2010) . Or, might we instead conceive an extended cultural omnivore self, engaged in forming an aggregate, proprietizing time, accruing knowledge, mobility and multicultural otherness to refashion and re-tool itself (Skeggs 2004: 144) , producing a monstrosity of some kind, that has no idea who speaks while stating I. The one who makes the sound? The one who casts the content or the one who is produced as the result of that relation?

What or who is the medium of receiving and what or who is the medium of expansion? Would there be a possibility to develop a practice of co-working that not only rethink the authorship and ownership but regards the power relations

from the start and continuously, not letting them settle in hierarchy or habit of recognised one's capacities? This question is to be located in organisational practices of collaborations in the area of cultural and knowledge industries.

Monstrous Agencies is a proposal of an analytic and organisational tool for re-articulation of cooperation and authorship, in particular context of procedures and institutions of artistic production. It analyses the existing structure in relation to politics of personhood and its adjustment to the precarisation of labour. My aim is to problematise the question of singular authorship and ownership, proposing instead a mutation and distortions within a frame of an extended monstrous conjunction between bodies, matters, tools, and procedures of how knowledges produce common and own. How bodies, matters, tools, and knowledges mutate between the states of common and owned as proper and property, improper, inappropriate and with (Trinh Minh-Ha term: inappropriate/d. Collaboration in that context is regarded as a process of co-mutation rather than a process of adaptation or sharing.

I will present here a fragment of a thought: thinking with a work in progress that is a two-step organisational practice for entering and inhabiting the space within the contexts of events for “collective” production of knowledge. Step one is based on the figure of a parasite and practice of parasitic – in this paper exemplified with a story of a tapeworm and Step two is about a monster and a practice of monstrous, exemplified here by the story of a vagina dentata.

PARASITE or ENTERING THE SPACE

(Starting to chew a gum while reading)

Parasite. The prefix para- means 'near', 'next to,' measures a distance. The sitos is the food. In this open mouth that speaks and eats, what is next to eating, its neighbouring function, is what emits sound. Para measures a difference between a reception and, on the contrary, an expansion. The latter makes one's own what is in common and what will soon be even more one's own, the living body. It already eats space. (Serres 1982: 144)

(Sticking a gum under the chair – Figure 2)



Figure 2

Peoria, Illinois, 1912: the horror begins. A society lady, encouraged by a friend's success with an easy new weight-loss treatment, pays \$25 for 'two rather large and suspicious-looking pills.' Her husband sends the pills to be analysed by the Washington public health service, and before long a 'government secret official' appears, informing him that the pills contain 'the head and first link of the body of a tape worm and sufficient nourishment to maintain life for probably a week.'

(Quackwriter, The Quack Doctor – Stories From Medicine's Past)

A moral of that newspaper produced tale from 20's of XX century shapes a female character(s) not only as fat but also irresponsible, perhaps stupid and a victim of a charlatan (quack-buster), necessarily to be saved by her husband, "government secret official" and legitimate health care system.

A voice you are hearing, now, comes from a temporarily uninhabited body for a tapeworm, although you never know.

Tapeworm can inhabit a spatial condition of 5-6 meter long. To produce this length in the format of writing, I would need to press a dash key for about 8,5 minutes and it would cover 2 A4 of double spacing. I will walk it in 6 steps.

(Walking six steps out the door – Figure 3)



Figure 3

(Walking six step into the room. The door stays open – Figure 4)



Figure 4

The first step for a parasite is to enter the space. That is always tricky. One cannot just walk in or not even apply and wish to be accepted. Entering is mediated through other bodies.

The bird tapeworm *Schistocephalus solidus*, causes their intermediate host, a copepod fish to look for warmer waters where it can outgrow the host causing it to be this slow to be surely eaten by the bird, a final host of a tapeworm.

I will read now a Score/an instruction for imagination exercise you can do right away.

Look for the body of a host. Affect the host so it will unknowingly carry you to the point when you can enter.

(You will now have a 30 seconds to start to imagine executing this task)

*(re-reading the score)
(30 second pause)*

MONSTER or YOU ARE IN, WHAT NOW?

“Chthonic ones are monsters in the best sense; they demonstrate and perform the material meaningfulness of earth processes and critters. They also demonstrate and perform consequences. Chthonic ones are not safe; they have no truck with ideologies; they belong to no one; they writhe and luxuriate in manifold forms and manifold names in all the air, water, and places of the earth.” (Haraway, 2016: 2)

Monstrum means an omen, a sign, Monere/moneo is to warn, Monstrare stands for showing, revealing and proving. ‘Who are ‘we’? ... It is a remonstrative question’ (Haraway, 2004:106), in which monstrare is not only pointing, revealing, but also objecting, remonstrating. It is a performance, a display of already a displacement, a re-cast of already a deformity. There is a monster of excess, ones with additional parts, monsters of lack, subtracted ones, and the double ones: ambivalent and ambiguous. According to Torkild Thanem those characteristics ‘enable heterogeneous couplings between bodies and machines (Law, 1991), multiple membership and marginalities (Star 1991, Munro 2001), distortions, subversions, undecidabilities, (Bloomfield and Vurdubakis, 1999) deviances and vulnerabilities (Shildrick, 2002)’. (Thanem, 2011:79)

Now, let’s look at the example of such: a teethed (*grinning*) vagina (*biting teeth*) - nursing, wanting too much, vulnerable, occupied with ideologies, violated. – vagina dentata - vampyric mother, asexual or overflowing female desire, and a weapon. Cannibalistic, castrating sexuality, dark, leaky and deadly. Appearing as fearing and fearful, deviant, mad, murderous bitch, only in an inadequate world of fixity and control. Refusing production and reproduction, fluid weapon, emotional, unknown yet in flesh, subjective, in making. A monster not ready for

the world, happening yet, 'more alive than it should be' (Nina Auerbach, 1995 about vampires), 'inexhaustible beauty' (Alfred Jarry), an animal companion. (Fox, 2017). Linked to mutation and deformation of pregnancy and children eating mother, awaiting a reciprocation for birth giving and nursing, vagina dentata is a form of casting away femininity, in the male economy of sexuality (Vachhani, 2009: 180), an agent of a different order, made of this world, yet, opening in itself of another realm.

Thanem's proposition of monstrous ethics in monstrous organisations is to re-open a place of mutation by recognition of a friction between moral rules, ethico-organisational structures and role performed in classes and categories of dominant social order and expanding boundaries of bodies and organisations. What means to invite a monster corporeal organisation in? It is to withdraw from imagining or projecting a virtue, and simply try to co-respond by not repressing the sense of hypocrisy, unease and inadequacy (Thanem, 2011), with all the unsettledness, that monstrous brings. It also is to act by use of multiple, monstrous roles, memberships and assembled capacities and to insist on keeping the memory of that becomings. It is to re-combine sense, in unease, in complexity and in ambiguity.

CONCLUSION

Perhaps this could be a beginning for what Maggie MacLure calls as "clinical practice" when it does not only approaches the innovative angle of a monster but tries to see what the monster has become and could become within the given institutional framework. The practice that "demands both care and recklessness," "dogged and respectful attention to the 'object' of analysis; and on the other a loss of ontological security as a result of refusing to allow oneself to be carried to a place of safety by dogmatic thinking or the comfort of methodology." (MacLure 2015:18) . The question is: can one allow oneself to commit at the same time to a monstrous process, constraints of the requirements of a research, and becoming a researcher together with others, without considering those conditionings as already monstrous? Perhaps enabling them to mutate first, would allow not to normalise the object of research. Two-step practice: Parasite – Monster, entering and inhabiting a space for an encounter in the context of collaboration in knowledge production is one approach. However minor this allowance of disruptive static in transmission is, it enables to lurk into "playing with impurities" (Holmes, 2016: 27) , not as they emerge out of darkness, but as a process of fluidity, as if "monstrosity already interferes with the conceptual framings of quality, holding within it, the delights of threat, decomposition and erosion" (Holmes. 2016: 2) . The rupture inevitably brings a bit of noise with it, an element of trespassing in an action of a crossing.

Bibliography

- Ehrenberg, A. (2010) "The Weariness of the Self". Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Fox, Ch. (2017) "The Young Monster". London. Fitzcarraldo Editions.

Haraway J. D. (2016) "Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene" Durham: Duke University Press.

Haraway J. D. (2004) "The Haraway Reader". New York: Routledge

Holmes, R. (2016). 'My tongue on your theory: Bittersweet 'quality' (in) research'. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* Vol. 37, Iss. 5. London, Routledge.

MacClure, M. (2015). "The 'new materialisms': a thorn in the flesh of critical qualitative inquiry?" In: MacClure, M. Left Coast Press, Inc. Left Coast Press, Inc. '.

Skeggs, B. (2004) "Class, Self, Culture". London: Routledge.

Serres, M.(1982), "The Parasite", Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

<http://thequackdoctor.com/index.php/eat-eat-eat-those-notorious-tapeworm-diet-pills/>
Accessed on 2.5.2018

Thanem, T. (2011), "The Monstrous Organization", Edward Elgar, Cheltenham.

Ueda, S. at all. (2016) "Host-ant specificity of endangered large blue butterflies (Phengaris spp., Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae) in Japan", *Scientific Reports* volume 6, Article number: 36364.

Vachhani J. Sheena, "Vagina Dentata and the Demonological Body: Exploration of the Feminine Demon in Organisation", *Bits of Organisation* by Alison Pullen & Carl Rhodes, 2009, Liber Copenhagen Bussiness School Press Universitetsforlaget

WHAT IS ARTISTIC RESEARCH BECOMING THROUGH AUTOMORPHOGENESIS?

Christiane Kues

Abstract

As Rosi Braidotti (2012; 2014) would put it, referring to the state of becoming, embodies the problem to speak from where you are.¹ Agreeing with Braidotti (2012, p.42), speaking from where you are is the first step for social and political commitment, especially in times where there is less time for methodological introspection. My proposal focuses on three artistic practices, which are productive and critical encounters to the cannibalistic impulse.

Starting with a short backlash to Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, and the automorphogenesis of authorship, secondly Lygia Clark's artistic work embodying anthropophagy to form social practices, and then the noisician Pharmakon, who performs effectively un-/becoming flesh.

Tristram Shandy's automorphogenesis introduces the idea of witnessing one's own conception and birth before becoming the author of the novel in 1759. The novel plays with romantic irony, self-observation and uses with great wit the endless auto-cannibalistic idea of writing about oneself with the aim to critically progress authorship in one novel.

Lygia Clark instead is influenced by the Brazilian poet Oswald de Andrade's Surrealist-inflected *Manifesto antropófago* published 1928 and South American artists, who responded to rationalistic European thought by embracing anthropophagy as a trans-identitarian cultural strategy. Clark's practice elliptically repeats over and over themes of embodiment, anthropophagy and what she called therapeutic work.

The final example brings up Noise by Pharmakon, Margaret Chardiet, and her album *Contact* from 2017. Her live performances use sounds and her body to pursue contact with the audience. The noise performed evokes contacts in states of un-/becoming flesh.

¹ I am referring here also to Braidotti's lecture, *Thinking as Nomadic Subject*, she gave at the Institute for Cultural Inquiry in Berlin, on 7.10.2014. (<https://www.ici-berlin.org/events/rosi-braidotti/>)

My paper asks the question what is Artistic Research becoming through automorphogenesis, referring to its constant state of inventing it-/self?

As Rosi Braidotti (2012; 2014) would put it, referring to the state of becoming, embodies the problem to speak from where you are. Agreeing with Braidotti (2012, p.42), speaking from where you are is however the first step for social and political commitment, especially in times where there is less time for methodological introspection. And Artistic Research has spent a lot of time thinking about and discussing innovative methodologies. So if the state of becoming proposes a post-identitarian potential, which affirms transformation and what Braidotti names 'politics of affirmation' (2018), she suggests a 'nomadic subject' (2012, p.43) that is critically engaged. Symptomatic for this subject is a constant state of becoming, for example becoming nomadic, queer, minoritarian, non-unitarian, relational, animal, or maybe cannibal?

Keeping this in mind, I want to introduce three artistic practices, which are productive as critical encounters for the cannibalistic impulse. Starting with a short backlash to a modern Classic in English Literature, Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* and the automorphogenesis of authorship. His specific automorphogenesis introduces the idea of witnessing ones own conception and birth before becoming the author of the novel in 1759. These scenes of Tristram Shandy's birth were whimsically staged in the film of Michael Winterbottom from 2006, titled *A Cock and a Bull Story* which was based on the novel by Sterne. The movie adapts the incongruent narrative through mixing up making-of scenes and actual events in the story. And pushing with all means the birth scene on an extravagant level of absurdity by showing Tristram Shandy played by Steve Coogan being born in a giant plastic womb, aesthetically appearing quite posthuman, after all. What has been called 'Shandyism'², is full of romantic irony and self-observation and also uses with great wit, the endless auto-cannibalistic idea of writing about oneself with the aim to critically progress authorship in one novel. The author Laurence Sterne, persistently postpones the actual birth of his main character Tristram Shandy by cutting up chronological orders of events, by digressing and being-non-fluid with his narration, instead he insists on ruptures

² The term 'Shandyism' was the title of the book by Peter Conrad, *Shandyism: The Character of Romantic Irony*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978 and more recently the exhibition concept (February 22 April 15, 2007) curated by Helmut Draxler, *Shandyism - Autorschaft als Genre* at the Secession in Vienna.

within dialogues and opens up gaps and dilemmas of his so called life, by constantly meshing up the story.

Through IX Volumes the framework of the novel stays with its title, focussing on Tristram's life and opinions and the staging of his birth, literally the introspection of becoming is here romantically ironic but at the same time still a necessity for manifesting the self, the author, the narrator and the characters.

For the author Laurence Sterne, his successful novel transformed not only literature and its critique of authorship but also his own life, from a Yorkshire priest to a national celebrity. (Ross, 1998, p.vii) Although the reader is often unable to convey concrete ideas in the novel, it was since then a great success in staging the birth of the subject through boundless subjectivity in a 'digressive and at the same time progressive way' (Ross, 1998, p.xvii).

The second encounter is the artistic practice of the Brazilian artist Lygia Clark. Her art practice originates from the neo-concrete movement in Brasil and develops a research oriented participatory critical practice.

An important influence for her engagement with cannibalism was the Brazilian poet Oswald de Andrade and his surrealist-inflected *Manifesto Antropófago* published in 1928. His manifesto articulated a response to rationalistic European thought by embracing anthropophagy as a trans-identitarian cultural strategy. Andrade wrote in his manifesto: 'Cannibalism alone unites us. Socially. Economically.

Philosophically. [...] Tupí or not tupí, that is the question.' (de Andrade, 1991, p. 38) Andrade is referring to the Native American tribe, the Tupinamba, meaning that if you are not a Tupí, in other words, you will be eaten.

Anuradha Vikram states about the influence of Andrade on artistic tradition in Latin America and the Diaspora, that:

The artistic tradition of anthropophagy here is one of transformative appropriation, using colonial symbols and representations but 'savaging' them by processes of reframing, corrupting, consuming, and regurgitating. (Vikram, 2013, pp.37-38)

Lygia Clark's practice elliptically repeats over and over these themes of embodiment, anthropophagy and what she later called therapeutic work. She forms a socially engaged art practices, interacting with subjects in and outside the arts. Before anthropophagy played a role in her art work, she made neo-concrete paintings, sculptures and drawings, and after 1963 she abandoned these more traditional practices and modes of 'art production and started making sensorial objects, she called 'propositions'. From then on her practice more radically negates a distinctions between subject and object and she 'attributes an absolute importance to the immanent act carried out by the participant' (Clark 1963, cited

in Butler et al., 2014, p.160). She used sensorial objects for her multi-sensorial artistic research, to point out some examples for 'visual' inquiry *Óculos* (Goggles), 1968 and *Diálogo Óculos*, 1968, for 'haptical' inquiry *Ping pong*, 1966 and 'spatial' inquiry *A casa é o corpo* (The house is the body), 1967-69. Besides using the sensorial objects as propositions, she developed in 1973 a participatory practice with her students while teaching at Sorbonne University in Paris, titled, *Baba antropofágica* (Anthropophagic slobber), 1973, which aims to 'lose the inner substances of your body' (Clark 1980, cited in Fabião, 2014, p.297). Clark describes the concrete instructions for the procedure in a letter to her colleague Hélio Oiticica 1974 the following:

A person lies on the ground. The others, kneeling around this person, put in their mouths spools of thread of various colors. With their hands they started pulling out the treads until the spool is emptied on the person lying down. The line comes out full of saliva and the people who pull it out start by feeling that they are simply pulling a thread, but next comes the perception that they are taking out their own viscera (ventre). Is it the phantasmatic of the body (fantasmática do corpo), as a matter of fact, that interests me, not the body itself. (Clark 1974, cited in Fabião, 2014, p.296)

After this procedure the threads are removed and the last act is the collective sharing of the lived experiences (vivências) in dialogues. The performance artist Eleonora Fabião, who has participated wrote about *Baba antropofágica* summing up her experience:

Baba antropofágica is a process of disfiguration to reconfigure capacities and modes of perception and relation. A practice that turns a body into an assemblage of bodies-personal, collective, human, nonhuman, virtual, actual, transtemporal; ground, cotton saliva, flesh, meat, memory, imagination, thinking, skin, concept, hands, lips, tendons, blue, squatting, spool, green, dream, drops, noises, nightmare, insects, cave, air. It is an immanent rite of passage from form to formation; from fragmentation (morcellement, as Clark referred to it) to assembling and self-structuring; from a bunch of people to a "collective body"; from separation and autonomy to the experience of self, group, and form as relational movement. (Fabião 2014, p.296)

Suley Rolnik refers to Oswald de Andrade's statement that 'anthropophagy would constitute a social therapy for the contemporary world' (Andrade, 1953 cited in Rolnik, n.d.a, p.19). Accordingly Clark changed her practice into a participatory practice in the time Brasil was under military regime; and after her

return to Rio de Janeiro in 1975 she started doing therapeutic work with *Objetos relacionais* (Relational objects), 1976 in her apartment. Suley Rolnik remarks that those relational objects are made of ordinary materials, without any definite form (2008, pp. 97-98).

This therapeutic experimentation defined by Clark was a process and the title of her therapeutic practice *Estruturação do Self* (Structuring of the self, 1976-1988), focuses on a concrete idea of giving a new structure to the self in times of military regime in Brasil and suppression of the body and the collective bodies. She uses the 'relational objects' to interact with the viewer's body. 'The sessions are characterised by an absence of speech, continuity, massage practice and body contact with the relational object by placing them onto the client.' (2008, p.98) Clark appropriated and transformed therapeutic practice in her own way within the geopolitical contexts she worked in. Rolnik describes this 'indiscernability between aesthetics, therapeutics, and politics' (2008, p.108) as the critical impact in her practice, which creates 'the necessary conditions for the reactivation of the political and aesthetic potentials of subjectivity and altogether of public life' (2008, p.111).

The third encounter brings up noise by Pharmakon, Margaret Chardiet, and her album *Contact* from 2017. She performs live using sounds and her body to pursue contact with the audience through noise and 'distorting electronics that devour the innards of the bodies' (Keenan, 2014, pp.37-38). 'She says that noise gives you a physical response or involuntary reaction, as opposed to music, for example guitar, drum, bass or maybe pop music that has looping melodies.' (2014, pp.37-38)

David Nowak says that, 'Noisicians are deeply involved in the search for a sound-producing environment that is neither determined by a distinct composer nor fully controlled by the performer.' (2013, p.156)

Pharmakon searches for trance states in her live performances to make 'contact' with the audience 'after leaving the body' through an auto-cannibalistic impulse. Noise performances most of the time produce an overload of information and intentionally no signals, in an experimental way to not become music or pure sound. With this strategy noise has been trying to criticise commodification processes and selling out to bigger labels, strategically playing hard to get and hard to listen to.

As Howard Slater remarks 'With noise there is a disruption of such repressing representations and an embracing of what Felix Guattari has called 'a-signification'. In some ways, then, the violence of noise, its 'affect torrent', can often be of the sort that confronts its human

auditors with the inhuman. A mental projection of the surface of the body.' (Slater 2007, p.158)

Coming back to the beginning after encountering these three practices and their constant state of becoming a strategy of Artistic Researchs' automorphogenesis; if Artistic Research affirms these critical strategies I introduced, it might become more participatory 'in practice', 'romantically ironic' or 'noise'. Artistic Research is here indiscernible with the politics of subjectivation, critically inventing, structuring and eating it-/self.

Bibliography

- Braidotti, R. (2012) *Nomadic Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Braidotti, R. (2014) "Thinking as a Nomadic Subject."
- Braidotti, R. and Barth, E. (2018) *Politik der Affirmation*. Berlin: Merve Verlag.
- Butler, C., Pérez Oramas, L. and Bessa, A. (2014) *Lygia Clark*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, p.160.
- de Andrade, O. and Bary, L. (1991) "Cannibalist Manifesto", *Latin American Literary Review*, Vol. 19(No. 38 (Jul. - Dec., 1991), p.38. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20119601> (Accessed: 6 August 2009).
- Fabião, E. (2014) "The Making of a Body", in Butler, C., Pérez Oramas, L. and Bessa, A. *Lygia Clark*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, pp. 295-298.
- Keenan, D. (2014) "Pharmakon", *The Wire*, 368(October 2014), pp. 37-38.
- Novak, D. (2013) *Japanoise*. Durham: Duke University Press, p. 156.
- Rolnik, S. (n.d.a) 'Anthropophagic Subjectivity'[PDF], p.19. Available at: http://corner-college.com/udb/cproPe0yM7Suley_Rolnik.pdf (Accessed: 5 April 2018).
- Rolnik, S. (2008) "Politics of flexible Subjectivity", in Terry, T., Enwezor, O. and Condee, N. *Antinomies of art and culture*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 97-112.
- Ross, I. (1998) "Introduction", in Sterne, L. *The life and opinions of Tristram Shandy, gentleman*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.vii-xvii.
- Slater, H. (2007) "Prisoners of the Earth Come Out!", in Iles, A. et al. [2009] *Noise & capitalism*. San Sebastián, Spain: Arteleku Audiolab, p. 158.
- Sterne, L. and Ross, I. (1998) *The life and opinions of Tristram Shandy, gentleman*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Vikram, A. (2013) "The Art of Anthropophagy", *X-tra Contemporary Art Quarterly*, 16 (1), pp. 37-38.

Abstract

This paper proposes artmaking as a means to perpetuate what Deleuze and Guattari (1988, p. 420) call a “nomad science”. This science is exemplified in the atomic physics of Democritus and Lucretius, the geometry of Archimedes and the rhizome. It follows a ‘problematic and hydraulic model of becomings and heterogeneities’ (ibid.), and considers figures only in relation to the things that affect them. For example, Deleuze and Guattari explain that this model sees a square as crucially dependent of processes of quadrature, a cube of cubature and a straight line of rectification. I introduce a non-representational approach to artmaking, understood as operations of ‘deformations, transmutations [...] metamorphoses, generations and creations’ (ibid., p. 422) that affects materials and designates “events” instead of aiming to reproduce Platonic Forms or Aristotelian Essences. One of the consequences of the latter is a different way of viewing “errors” occurring during practice, which rather than mistakes, are accounted as ‘accidents that condition and resolve’ (ibid., 420) the material practices themselves. In fact, these accidents are seen as circumstances with great creative potential that indeed show new and unthinkable directions. Therefore, I propose that “errors” within practice are events where the genesis of differences and opportunities for change emerge. I present three projects — “Sewing to deform a cotton fabric”; “Squaring a brushwork” and “Knitting with plastic bags” — where I have approached the making processes following this problematic model. The main method used is based on explorations on three materials by means of manual work in the context of artmaking. In these processes, instead of taking the lead, I have followed these materials’ behaviours with the aim of understanding their individual ‘singularities’ (ibid., p. 7). Through repetitive practice, the final aim of these projects is to produce material metamorphoses, deformations and transmutations, in the search of the emergence of something new.

Introduction

This paper analyses three experiences of making using non-representational ideas developed by the French philosophers Deleuze and Guattari (1988).¹ The objective of these projects was to work with three materials – cotton fabric, paint and plastic bags – and to produce something new by means of manual work. I rethought

¹ Acknowledgements: I would like to express my deep gratitude to Deborah Cassis and Florencia Ortúzar for their useful and constructive recommendations on this paper.

these three experiences of making by focusing on the material processes that unfolded. That analysis led me to a new understanding of art practices. I started seeing these practices as processes where individuals and objects (materials, tools and ideas) engage in reciprocal interactions and establish a relation of co-creation, rather than the individual imposing methods and forms to those objects. As a result, an innovative aspect of the approach to making that I propose is the account of *errors* encountered throughout these processes. I introduce a view of them as creative elements instead of as simple mistakes. The reason is that, within these problematic moments, habitual modes of thinking are challenged and the practitioner is forced to think differently in order to find solutions that can resolve these problems.

Accordingly, this paper proposes artmaking as a means to perpetuate what Deleuze and Guattari (1988, p. 420) call a “nomad science”. I argue that following the methods of this science within processes of making gives, as a result, the production of non-representational practices. I propose that the importance of this is that, through non-representational practices of making, instead of reproducing existing models of thought, it is possible to enable the emergence of new ideas and objects.

First, I outline differences between nomad science and royal sciences to introduce a problematic model, which further defines the non-representational approach to making proposed in this paper. Second, I define in detail this non-representational model of practice, which is mainly based on a method of following materials and matters, and searches for the generation of new things. I describe in detail the idea of singularity and explain how it can be used to guide decisions towards new and unthought directions. I also present a new conception of “errors” occurring within practice, which instead of being assigned with negative values are signalled as potential elements of novelty that can be useful for the creation of new ideas and hence, to transform knowledge. Third, I introduce my practice and I present three projects where I have approached the making processes following this problematic method. Finally, I conclude by describing the change that my practice has experienced, from representation to non-representation, which is a consequence of introducing and following this problematic model.

Nomad Science (rhizome) vs Royal Sciences (arborescent)

This section introduces the non-representational model of nomad science by outlining its differences with the representational model of royal science. It also defines the *problematic* approach that is characteristic of nomad science in order to

finally delineate the particular approach to artmaking that I propose and endorse in this paper.

Deleuze and Guattari elaborate a definition of nomad science by contrasting it with royal science. Firstly, they describe that royal science is a theory of forms, solids and essences, whereas nomad science is the theory of flows, fluids and change. Royal science's aim is to predict and represent (reproduce) phenomena (*beings*), whereas nomad science's goal is to understand processes (*becomings*). In addition, the model of royal science is the similar, constant and eternal, while nomad science's model is difference, heterogeneity and transformation, that is, 'becoming itself' (ibid., p. 421). Royal science is marked by 'arborescent'² (ibid., p. 7), transcendent, static and representational models — such as Plato's *Theory of Forms*, or Aristotle *essences* — whereas, nomad science is represented by rhizomatic³ immanent, dynamic and non-representational models — such as 'the atomic physics of Democritus and Lucretius and the geometry of Archimedes' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, p. 421).

Royal science uses theorems, which are strictly rational, and focusses on outcomes. Whereas, nomad science uses *problems*, which are principally intuitive, and focusses on material processes of transformation (*becoming*). In other words, instead of expecting outcomes, nomad science sees things as *problems* to work with. In light of this, nomad science considers figures only in relation to the things that *affect* them. For that reason, it accounts for phenomena as *events*, because they cannot be separated from the very processes that generated or that can transform them. Royal science, on the contrary, analyses phenomena as such and seeks to predict and discover traits of essences with the aim of continuing on the building of the categories of *being*.

For example, Deleuze and Guattari (1988, p. 427) observe that a circle is a 'theorematic figure'. A circle is an Ideal *form*, an *essence* that is exact, fixed and transcendent. On the contrary, "roundness" is a 'problematic figure' (ibid.). Roundness is a vague and fluid quality that is different from circles and from round things. Other variations of problematic figures, which are vague but rigorous are 'transformations, distortions, ablations, and augmentations' (ibid.) of

² The arborescent model is a representational hierarchical system whose image draws from the shape of trees and roots. It 'proceeds by dichotomy' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, p. 4) through reflecting, doubling and copying an initial perspective.

³ The 'rhizome' (ibid., p. 7) is a non-representational and non-hierarchical model inspired in a botanical structure typical of bulbs and tubers, which are composed by horizontal networks of interconnected elements. Also, instead of building up from doubles and reflections, as in representation, this model embraces the creation of the new through the establishment of connections between already existent elements.

Ideal *forms* (*essences*). For that reason, variations of problematic figures are ‘vague essences’ (ibid., p. 428). The *singularities* of a matter are examples of vague essences because they are determinations, or constants, that are extracted from things that are more abstract than any characteristic or essential trait of the thing itself.

In addition, nomad science never detains its enquiry on things as such, but uses them as starting points to unravel a history of complex processes leading to their formations. For instance, Deleuze and Guattari (ibid, p. 422) explain that the model of nomad science sees a square as crucially dependent of a process of ‘quadrature, the cube of a cubature and the straight line of a rectification’. In other words, nomad science proposes to see forms as material traces of specific processes of formation, or to look at formations as documents of processes. For that reason, Drummond and Themessl-Huber (2007, p. 434) describe nomad science as ‘an open-ended system for thinking about and engaging with reality’.

Deleuze and Guattari (1994) present a singular approach to the *problematic* because “the problem” is proposed as a positive element. In other words, they present a view of problems as necessary *encounters* and as situations that actually trigger new ways of thinking. Drummond and Themessl-Huber (2007, p. 439) stress that problems are ‘part of the very context in which thought itself occurs’. Consequently, in light of Deleuzoguattarian thought, problems emerge as a type of knowledge that present new opportunities to seek change. Williams (2003, p. 131) supports this view and argues that ‘when thinking emerges and changes, it is necessarily accompanied by problems’. In fact, the solutions ideated to the encountered problems change the nature of the obstacles that may cause and can actually convert them into creative agents and into meaningful ‘forms of knowledge’ (Drummond and Themessl-Huber 2007, p. 440).

Non-representational Artmaking

The following section presents the view of artmaking that I endorse in this paper. This perspective approaches material practices in terms of explorative processes of learning while shaping materials, that look for the emergence of the new ‘through the embracing of problems’ (ibid., p. 434).

In this paper I propose that using the model of nomad science as an applied framework to approach artmaking leads to non-representational practices. The reason is that, different to the procedures of royal science – which are based on reproducing (representing) – nomad science’s *problematic* procedures consist in *following*. In other words, using the problematic model in the context of making

processes is to engage and account for materials (or matters⁴) with a sense of *problems* to work with. This approach to practice has as its principal challenge to discover the *singularities* of those materials, in order to further manipulate them but also by following them. The ultimate goal of a problematic model of practice is the search for the emergence of something new. In addition, in order to seek for those singularities, practitioners should also engage ‘in *following* matter’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, p. 436). Consequently, following is a principal method within problematic approaches to making.

This problematic model of practice is non-representational because it defines processes where individuals and materials are engaged in reciprocal interactions in which the development of the making process itself is more important than any expected outcome. Also, the main goal of such practices is to understand processes and use them to produce transformations or metamorphosis, instead of aiming to reproduce or represent previously existing models. Concretely, the organisation of the kind of work dictated by *following* the matter ‘does not employ the form-matter duality’ (ibid., p. 430) typical of a static model of representation, but a dynamic relation of ‘material-forces’ (ibid., p. 424).

Procedures of *following* within making processes are such as the search for connections between the *singularities* of the materials engaged or the analysis of those *singularities* aiming to trace and to understand the manners in which they behave. In other words, the goal is to seek for those *singularities*’ particular ‘traits of expression’ (ibid., p. 430) and to understand the degree of the connections – between natural and artificial (forced) – of these *singularities* and *expressions*. After the singularities are identified, their behaviours and traits of expression are traced and understood. The goal is to use this knowledge as guide to engage in further explorations of making.

Different to representation, whose aim is to abstract ‘constants from variables’ (ibid.) – that is, to find sameness and repetition between *singularities* – this non-representational approach aims at exploring these variables by putting them in motion. Hence, by means of exploiting *singularities*, that is, putting them to work in the search for variations, it is possible to attain the production of what is different. Crucially, non-representational approaches to making focus on actions, movements and processes, aim at learning and changing in the very act of shaping something new. Representation, on the contrary, looks for repetition. It seeks for a constant of form (formalism), which is extracted from a pre-existent model for its further reproduction. Deleuze and Guattari argue that a major

⁴ Issues, concerns or businesses.

drawback of models for reproduction is that they imply 'the permanence of a fixed point of *view* that is external to what is reproduced' (ibid., p. 433). *Following* is different to reproducing, because the aim of the practitioner engaged in it is 'to *discover* a [new] form' (ibid. – my accent). Following necessitates an 'engagement with the problematic nature of the material or project under consideration' (Drummond and Themessl-Huber 2007, p. 430) in order to find new solutions to resolve them.

Following invites us to break the 'habits of thought and patterns of action' (Ansell Pearson 2002, p. 10) that keep us away from a recognition and true engagement with 'our own creative conditions of existence' (ibid.). Hence, using the method of *following* within making can be a mechanism to make habitual modes of practice to evolve and reach areas that go beyond a mere problem of representation and the utilitarian. It can help us 'to seek new ways and forms of becoming' (Drummond and Themessl-Huber 2007, p. 436) and to bring forth new things and events into the world. As Drummond and Themessl-Huber put it, *following* brings a hope that 'something, not just different from before, but also new, may emerge' (ibid., p. 437). In light of the above, the non-representational approach to artmaking that I propose in this paper understands practice as *problematic* operations of 'deformations, transmutations [...] metamorphoses, generations and creations' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, p. 422) that *affect* materials and designate *events* instead of aiming to reproduce Platonic *Forms* or Aristotelian *Essences*.

An important and innovative aspect of my approach to making is the view I propose for *errors*. I take the *errors* encountered throughout the processes of making for more than simple mistakes, considering them as *problems* themselves. In other words, the moments when things do not work as planned are presented as situations where habitual modes of thinking are challenged, and the practitioner is forced to think differently in order to find solutions. Also, in general, *errors* are moments of *encounters* in which materials and matters' *singularities* are revealed to the maker. For that reason, these are crucial moments that shape the practice from within. Because the things that are *encountered* affect further decisions, they have leading roles in changing the evolution of the work and determining its possible future. Consequently, rather than mistakes, *errors* are accounted as valuable *encounters* and 'accidents that condition and resolve' (ibid.) the material practices themselves.

Accordingly, instead of being 'marked with a negative value' (ibid., p. 135) an *error* is accounted here as a creative element, and also as an agent of Deleuzoguattarian (ibid., p. 434) *deteritorialisation*, because it 'extends the territory' of the practice towards unthought directions. In other words, mistakes are proposed as

constructive *events* with great creative potential that show different perspectives and guide the evolution of the practice to other territories. The reason is that the solutions we find to these problems change the nature of these obstacles and convert them into forms of knowledge. Hence, by expanding and changing the territory (practice) from which they originate, *errors* enable new ways of thinking and doing, allow the genesis of difference and bring opportunities for creating change. Consequently, a non-representational and *problematic* approach to practice and knowledge allows the constitution of new territories, which further extend the already existing fields.

Three Projects

My work focusses on minimal approaches to controlled motion. It generally consists of highly repetitive practices, based on mechanical movements that are reduced, regular and precise. As described above, I see forms as documents of *processes of formation*, and making as mixed ‘assemblages’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1988; Smith 2016) of objects (material and abstract) and individuals. These assemblages are formed through the *actions* performed by those individuals, whose types of movements can be of a varied range between mobile and immobile.⁵ My aim through practice is to explore how my inter/*actions* with materials unfold through time and get woven together through the generation of work. For example, my contribution to the dialogue with materials is strongly influenced by knitting, which I have practiced throughout all my life. Therefore, my work either literally involves knitting, weaving or sewing, or they use some of the repetitive methods of those practices such as counting and building compositions based on agglomerations of simple units to create larger wholes.

I now present three projects — “Sewing to deform a cotton fabric”; “Squaring a brushwork” and “Knitting with plastic bags” — where I have approached the making processes following the *problematic* model outlined above. In other words, I have engaged with each of these materials thinking of them as problems to work with. Also, I have worked towards looking for ways to resolve these problems. In these projects I have also sought for a transformation of materials by means of approaching the making processes in terms of problematic operations of *following*. Accordingly, the procedures I have used are based on explorations where I have followed these materials and sought for *singularities* that could give clues of possible directions where to further guide the making processes. *Repetition* was also used as a main method in these three projects.

⁵ such as thinking, planning or imagining.

More concretely, the aim in each of these works is to explore the *problem* of a cotton fabric, of paint and of plastic bags, seeking to discover some of these materials' *singularities*. After uncovering these singularities, I have tried to understand their behaviours in order to further learn how to manipulate them. Then, I have handled those singularities through repetitive practices, looking for deformations and metamorphoses of those materials. Overall, all these making processes have been centred on the search for the emergence of something new, by means of manipulating and producing variations of the encountered *singularities*. Accordingly, all the final outcomes are based on variations of almost identical units that together construct aggregated and collective pieces.

In some of these experimentations I have begun with the aim of *following* specific matters or issues. However, the materials' *singularities* usually showed me other possibilities that I had not thought of initially. This has led to the opening of other routes and finally to the emergence of something new. For example, the specific matter of a fractal cube is an issue that I have been *following* for a while. I had been thinking for some time of how to construct it and had looked for different materials to work with. As explained below, I first did some explorations following this matter by using plastic bags. In that case, because the *singularities* of the matter of a fractal cube and the *singularities* of plastic bags are not compatible, they simply did not work well together. However, during this "failed" project, I discovered and understood some singularities of plastic bags when they are used in combination with knitting. That encounter finally directed me to develop another project with this material, which I had not thought of in the first place.

Sewing to deform a cotton fabric



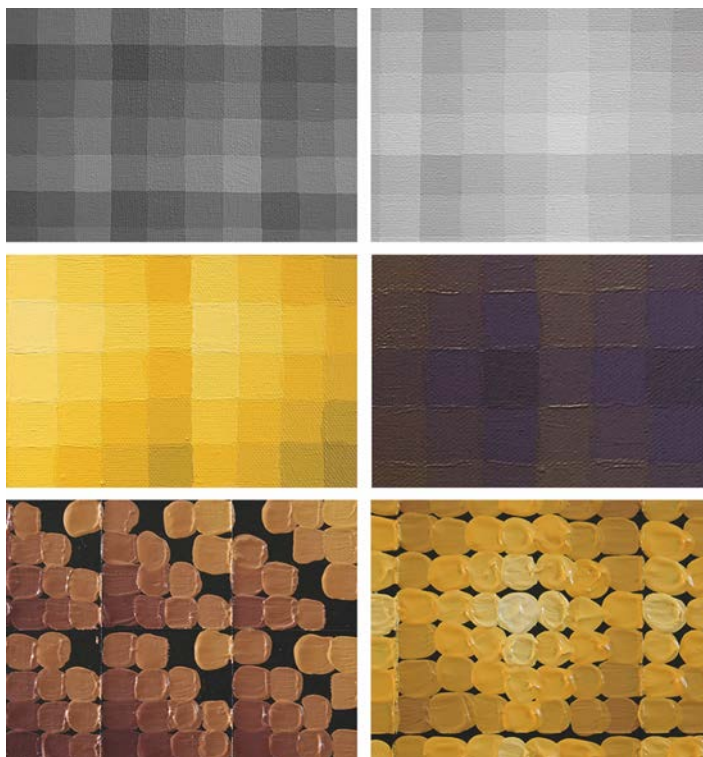
1- Rioseco, M. (2004) *Entropy* [cotton fabric and acrylic yarn] 150 x 150 cm approx.

This project began as a work of embroidery, where I worked with a cotton fabric in natural colour, tensed over a wooden squared stretcher. For this project, I first used an extremely thin and delicate black sewing cotton thread. The event that emerged in this project, which led to its transformation, was the consequence of a “mistake”. Because the fabric was not properly tensed on the stretcher, at some point, a wrinkle of fabric appeared inbetween stitches. This small event enabled me to identify some principal *singularities* of the fabric and of the technique I was working with. I realised that my methods were based on sewing more than on embroidery. I also understood that *following* the sewing of a cotton fabric implied that I could perform actions such as making knots, binding or tying many pieces of fabric, making wrinkles, corrugations or folds, piercing or perforating the fabric, to mention some.

This realisation encouraged me to take the fabric off the stretcher and push the boundaries of the technique I was using. I was searching for the emergence of something new, by means of following the sewing and the cotton fabric. Soon after, I changed the thin sewing thread for a black acrylic yarn, a much more robust material. The yarn allowed me to sew within a wider range of intentions and forces, using a lot of strength as well as being extremely delicate. This further enabled a change in my conception of sewing, from a constructive method that can be used to create forms with fabric and can also be used to repair, to a more rough and deconstructive perspective of it, as a method that can deform and consume a piece of fabric. I sewed for six months, adding many extra pieces of fabric. An important feature of this project is that, the more I worked on it, the smaller and more rigid the fabric became, leaving less and less space and flexibility to continue sewing and working on it.

I finally linked this project to the notion of entropy, that is, to the idea of how work can transform materials, produce an exhaustion of matter and energy, and to finally convert them into matter and energy that cannot be used, that is, into waste. The main takeaway of this project, was that if I continue working until there is no more space of cotton fabric to sew, then the work will end up being an amorphous rounded black mass, in which no work can be done anymore. I left it in a middle stage of development, and proposed the audience to imagine possible outcomes, instead of imposing an irreversible end.

Squaring a brushwork



2- Rioseco, M. (2016) *Gestural Minimalism* [oil and acrylic on canvas] 1 x 1 cm each square.

The aim of this project was to establish a dialogue between woven surfaces and pixel-based digital images, which share the common element of a grid as basic structure. I used painting as the mediator of this dialogue.

I began this project by drawing a grid on a canvas and painting the squares of the grid as precisely as I could. The event that emerged in this project was also the consequence of “errors”. Because it is not possible to paint perfect squares by

hand, imperfections and differences between squares emerged immediately. These imperfections became progressively more apparent, which is correlated with the fact that I was also progressively more tired, as I was completing the development of the painting.

These imperfections “showed” me that I was imposing a very rigid structure, not only to the painting, but also to my hand. Hence, the idea of following them instead emerged. I slowly started liberating the pictorial gesture from extremely rigid formal constraints, but always keeping the aim of a minimality and control of motion. My gesture gradually started following the smooth quality of the matter of paint, until each square was filled with only one gesture and occupied by a single brushstroke.

To analyse more in detail the process I went through in this project I will introduce Deleuze and Guattari’s (1988, p. 25) “templates” and “squaring”. A template or pattern is a representational device used as guide to produce identical copies of a figure or of an original model. Templates belong to a ‘rational order’ (ibid., p. 422) and are products of static frameworks that promote ‘the primacy of the fixed model of form’ (ibid., p. 425). Also, in order to produce ‘a model for reproduction’ (ibid., p. 429), ‘mathematical figures, and measurements’ (ibid.) are some of the methods used. For example, a stencil, matrix, cast or mould of a square are templates that produce series of infinite versions of a perfect square. More concretely, the grid is a template, because it is produced by an exact model of reproducible patterns of squares.

In contrast to squared templates, Deleuze and Guattari introduced ‘squaring’ (ibid.: 425) to describe a similar operation to the former, but without using instruments for precision or aiming to exactly reproduce a model. Accordingly, squaring corresponds to operations where squared figures are produced through metamorphoses of materials, which are transmuted in approximation to the characteristics of a square. More concretely, squaring would be the action of shaping something following the *attributes* of a squared shape – that is, a geometric form with four equal sides connected in four equal corners of 90° each. Different to templates, squaring is an operation that will result in the production of different objects within a range of similarity. For that reason, templates are a representational practice, whereas squaring is non-representational.

When analysing the above pictorial project in light of templates and squaring, I realized that at first, I was painting a squared template and imposing a shape to the material. However, as I started following the paint, I progressively begun “squaring a brushstroke”. As a consequence of following the paint something new

emerged in my practice. As concrete outcome of this approach, new elements were activated in my work. Examples of these elements are: the emergence of the characteristic pictorial relation between figure and ground, and the production of richer surfaces with more textures, haptic properties and contrasts among others. Also, new possibilities were opened to integrate other materials, apart from paint, such as threads for constructing the grids and the use of gilding with metal leaf in the backgrounds. The new method that emerged as a consequence of the “mistakes” confronted with, entailed a less constrained approach to the practice of painting, which is lot more enjoyable to perform.

Knitting with plastic bags



3- Rioseco, M. (2016) *Coral Growth* [plastic bags] work in process.

This project was originated by the aim of creating a response to the world-wide known practice of knitting with yarn made of recycled plastic bags. The objective I sought when working with recycled plastic was to promote consciousness of plastic waste and to use making as a method to transform waste into useful material resources for constructing new things.

Technically, I explored the production of different thickness of threads in relation to the use of different types of plastic bags. I found that some plastics are more flexible, while others are more rough and rigid. Also, while making the yarn, I

made a “mistake” by pulling the yarn without intention. That led me to discover that, only with some especially soft plastics, if you pull very delicately, it is possible to obtain an extremely thin and delicate cotton-like plastic thread.

My first idea was to knit in crochet a volume in the shape of a fractal cube. In order to give the appropriate structure to the cube I tried many things. I knitted the yarn extremely tightly and more loosely, I ironed the yarn and the knitted units to melt the plastic, making it harder and giving it a more stable structure. I tried different ways to connect each unit such as knitting, sewing, gluing or stapling them, but nothing worked. The cube was problematically amorphous, and no matter what I tried, the plastic was not compatible with the form of a fractal cube. I then realised that the “mistake” I was making was to impose an idea, that is, a preconceived rigid structure, to a soft material.

I planned two solutions to this problem. I thought of making an underlying structure with wire, or, to *follow* the material in the search for a better structure that could be more compatible with it. As a result, I understood that the wire structure was not in line with the problematic model that this project intended to follow. The reason is that, instead of following the singularities of the plastic and working in alignment with them, working with a metal structure was again an act of imposing an external structure of another kind of material to the plastic.

Overall, I decided to work with a structure that could be in line with the soft and flexible characteristics of the plastic bags. Also, I looked for a structure that could be defined in relation to *following* an inner logic of the method of knitting I was using, instead of imposing an external logic to it. Consequently, as I started knitting the piece, the structure was progressively defined and emerged from within the process. Concretely, I started with only one stitch. In the first row I augmented the necessary amount of stitches in order to knit in circle, using that first stitch as the center. Then, in every new row I duplicated the number of stitches by adding one new stitch per every stitch of the row. Further on, I continued duplicating the quantity of stitches until the shape was so intricate that I decided to stop. After that, I continued knitting without adding more stitches, which is the current stage of the work today, as the project has not been concluded. The use of white bags in conjunction to the knitting method that I finally decided to work with, results in a growing formation whose shape can bring interesting associations to aquatic natural forms such as corals. The final outcome of this project is yet to be decided, but it will certainly depend on the results given by the different bags and types of plastics that I will find and use.

Conclusion

After analysing these three experiences using a problematic model, I now see artmaking as a hybrid reciprocal process of co-creation between subjects and objects. What is of most importance, is that within those processes, it is not only the materials which are transformed, but also the individual. For that reason, I see the objects produced throughout these interactions as outcomes and cristalisations of a mutual transformation and of each others processes of *becoming*.

The development of the ideas presented throughout the paper, were initiated by proposing that artmaking can be a means to perpetuate nomad science. Using this science as framework helped to build a non-representational model, with the goal to further apply it to methods and approaches to armaking. Nomad science informs the problematic perspective introduced. This view accounts for materials and matters with a sense of problems to work with, and aims to find solutions that can resolve these problems. The methods of this model are principally based on following those materials and matters, in the search for those materials and matters' singularities. Once the singularities are discovered, the intention is to learn how to manipulate them, in order to put them further at work, seeking to produce difference. Consequently, the final aim of these processes is to search for the emergence of something new. I presented three projects and used them as examples to analyse the approach to making I performed in them, using this problematic model of nomad science as framework.

An important outcome of this practice-based research project is the new conceptions of "errors" that I propose. These accidents are linked to the singularities of materials and matters, which show to the individuals unthought directions where to guide their practices. Hence, errors are seen as eventful circumstances where singularities of materials are revealed to the maker and further allow this latter to engage in *following* the matter. For that reason, mistakes can have a great creative potential, enable the genesis of what is different and bring real opportunities for changing.

A main consequence of the use of the notion of *following* as method to produce and to analyse work, is that it has allowed a qualitative change to happen in my practice and in my approach to making. Within this transformation my original approach that was based on a 'static relation, form-matter, tend[ed] to fade into the background in favour of a dynamic relation, material-forces' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, p. 424). Now I take my projects with more flexibility and understand that, not only they can change while they develop, but actually expect them to be transformed throughout the evolving processes. I even hope to be

surprised by the materials, tools and ideas that I engage with and look forward to the different and novel ways in which they can lead me.

Bibliography

- Ansell Pearson, K. (2002). *Philosophy and the adventure of the virtual: Bergson and the time of life*. London: Routledge.
- Deleuze, G. and Félix G. (1988) 2014. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Reprint. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Drummond, J. S. and Themessl-Huber, M. (2007) "The cyclical process of action research: The contribution of Gilles Deleuze". *Action Research*. Issue 5(4). 430–448.
- Serres, M. (2000). *The Birth of Physics*. Jack Hawkes (trans.), David Webb (ed.). Manchester: Clinamen Press.
- Smith, Ruth. 2016. 'Encountering methodology through art: A Deleuzoguattarian territory of action research'. *Action Research*. Vol. 14(1). 36–53.
- Williams, J. (2003). *Gilles Deleuze's difference and repetition: A critical introduction and guide*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

DIGESTION AND REGURGITATION: METHODS OF CONTESTATION IN ARTISTIC RESEARCH

Spencer Roberts

Abstract

The question of eating ourselves (and of eating others) seems particularly pertinent in the context of artistic research, where, in its focus upon subjectivity and affirmation, the issue of framing an opposition can all too easily become moot. Orthorexia refers to an obsession with only ingesting food that is 'pure'. What is considered to be 'pure' or 'impure' varies from person to person, but an individual's belief about what constitutes healthy food may lead them to exclude certain nutrients or entire food groups from their diet, resulting in a cannibalisation of their internal resources. Conditions such as orthorexia, anorexia and bulimia reflect a set of broadly immanent, and affective concerns, whilst nevertheless embodying somewhat tensile attitudes towards relation. As such, they provide an interesting perspective from which we might address notions of affirmation, argumentation and opposition in a creative-research context.

Arguably, anorexia is an auto-cannibalistic, overtly non-relational activity. That is to say, in avoiding consumption, the anorexic tends towards the imperceptible, whilst ultimately consuming themselves from within. In contrast to this, the bulimic appears to gorge on relations – tasting, affirming, and ingesting everything – whilst subsequently purging it from the body in a partially digested fashion. Interestingly, both conditions are accompanied by symptoms of body dysmorphia, a mode of self-caricature that also functions as a regulatory motif. Nevertheless, the bulimic remains close to average bodyweight whilst the anorexic withers away.

With these observations in mind, this paper explores strategies of contestation and negation as they occur in Deleuzian philosophy – a philosophy highly influential in the formation of practices of artistic research, which is likewise associated with the affirmation of relations and with becoming imperceptible. It is claimed here, firstly that Deleuze's mode of criticism is bulimic in character - that his directive that we should strive to become imperceptible can proceed only after he has first 'virtualised' his opponents – reducing their difference to self-identity, and secondly, that it is through consideration of Deleuze's virtualisation of others, that we might develop strategies of argumentation and creative contestation that are still noticeably lacking in the context of artistic research

Introduction

This paper explores the inception and transformation of artistic research through the lens of the differential modes of being that are more commonly categorised as eating ‘disorders’. Conditions such as orthorexia, anorexia and bulimia reflect a set of broadly immanent, and affective concerns, whilst nevertheless embodying somewhat tensile attitudes towards relation. That is to say, eating is a relational activity, that may involve exploration, consumption, and digestion as well as rejection, expulsion and regurgitation. The process of eating per se places us in intimate relation with other things, whilst at the same time subjecting them to a form of dissolution – we partially absorb what we consume, whilst expelling the remainder from our bodies – sometimes in the form of vomit – but most often in the form of urine or faecal matter – a series of ‘waste’ substances, which nevertheless still teem with microbial life. In this sense, modes of consumption provide an interesting perspective from which we might address both the relational practice of affirmation, and non-relational practices of argumentation and opposition in the context of artistic-research.

We will begin by exploring certain orthorexic tendencies that characterized the early stages of the debate concerning the legitimacy of artistic research. Orthorexia refers to an obsession with only ingesting food that is ‘pure’. As we shall see, the inception of artistic research took place in a climate of contestation – in which overtly purist, somewhat caricatured notions of both ‘research’ and ‘art’ were placed into opposition. It is significant, for instance that Christopher Frayling’s (1994) oft cited seminal paper which purported to provide an overview of stake-holding positions at the argument’s inception, began not by examining any actual voice within the debate, but chose instead to interrogate a series of Hollywood stereotypes.

In the context of his discussion, Frayling presented us with a series of pure but lifeless stereotypes and caricatures – those of the impassioned, lunatic artist, the pragmatic designer-boffin, the designer-semiotician (as a surfer of signs and culture) and contrasting clichés of the ‘saintly’ and ‘mad’ scientist (Ibid, pp.3-4). Such abstractions enabled Frayling to stage a set of oppositions, but there is an important sense in which his paper failed to critically engage with the complexities of any position as it was actually held – preferring instead to debate a series of rather idealised, ghostly representations (Borgdorff, 2012, p.5).

Perhaps most interestingly, in this early point in the discussion, Frayling stated in no uncertain terms that he could not see how raw, un-textually mediated artistic

production could speak to the category of research, and that as a consequence he was unsure of how the term could be meaningfully employed. Frayling's empty category of 'research for art' set the tone for the critique of the subjectivity, ineffability and lack of communication that coloured critical accounts of artistic practice, and which dominated much of the early debate concerning the legitimacy of artistic research. Ironically, however, it is Frayling's disputed category of research *for* art that has come to prominence in more recent times, and which has been brought into focus in the performative context of artistic research - notably due to a turn away from epistemology and towards a series of more ontologically focused concerns.

The Orthorexic Inception of Artistic Research

The early contestation of what, in an Anglophone context, was once known as practice-based or practice-led research can be seen as orthorexic in the sense that it driven by overtly narrow, and somewhat purist conceptions of both research and art. That is to say, in the early stages of the debate the image of artistic practice from the perspective of its critics was that of an impure, or tainted food that was not fit for consumption. Those who aligned themselves with 'traditional' modes of research saw artistic practice, as resulting in ill defined, highly subjective outcomes, which were poorly suited to what were taken to be the at once objective, rigorous, and communicative demands of academia. Those hostile to practice-led modes of enquiry focused upon what they took to be the impurity of artistic practice when seen from a traditional academic perspective. That is to say, they focused upon the ways in which the idea of artistic research seemed to jar with academic values and to square poorly with what they took to be its rational, investigative ideals (Frayling, 1994; Elkins, 2009; Durling, 2002; Biggs & Büchler, 2010). In short, when seen from the perspective of more traditional research paradigms, modes of artistic research in which sensation, or the subjectivity of artistic practice played a major part, were simply not considered Kosha food.

Whilst, much criticism focused upon the practicalities of assessment and the difficulties in determining the degree to which knowledge might be tacitly encoded in artistic artefacts, it was the performative dimension of the artwork that seemed most unpalatable to critics, with particular scrutiny being cast upon the subjective and interpretative context of artistic exhibition (Durling, 2002; Biggs, 2002; 2008).

It seems clear today that the issue of 'purity' from the perspective of the academy foregrounded a somewhat positivistic research agenda, whilst aligning this with particularly propositional view of language. Those critical of artistic modes of research frequently took issue with what was perceived to be artistic researchers'

resistance to, or reluctance to engage with verbal or textual modes of argumentation (Durling, Friedman & Gutherson, 2003; Elkins, 2009) - the importance of language in the formulation and structuring of argument was stressed, along with its power to capture, compare, and evaluate information (Biggs, 2002; 2003). We might say that for the critics of artistic research, it was important not only to consume the right food, but also to eat with the correct implements, and with the appropriate kind of decorum. The idea that there might be more visceral approaches to the consumption of food - that we might choose to eat with our hands, for instance or that artefacts as performative assemblages could in any sense 'speak for themselves' was initially granted very little countenance.

It is important to recognise, however, that issues of 'purity' in representation were not limited to those who purported to speak for the academy. Whilst orthorexics are united in their belief that the food which they ingest must be 'pure', there is an important sense in which what is considered to be 'pure' or 'impure' varies from individual to individual, and many practitioners were outraged at the prospect of a mode of artistic research that did not sanction artistic practice as a way of engaging with the world. Here the notion of purity centred upon the artwork, and the potential for it to become tainted in its intersection with positivistic and overly rationalised research processes. Thus, commentators such as Dennis Strand (1998, p.16) stressed the way in which the methodologies of artistic researchers are "in the arts", and that their investigations are "in their practice". Likewise, Brad Haseman (2006), suggested that artistic researchers were 'impatient with the methodological restrictions ...and the emphasis on written outcomes' (Ibid, p. 3). Haseman noted how artistic researchers preferred to construct experiential starting points, to 'lead research through practice' and to explore presentational forms that are 'not bound by the linear and sequential constraints of discursive or arithmetic writing' (Ibid, p. 5). In a similar vein, Haseman articulated an important tension between practice-led research and the idea of 'narrow problem setting' (Ibid, p. 4) or of rigid methodological requirements being imposed at a project's outset. Such observations served to fuel the debate over the extent to which research in the creative arts might consist of artworks or exhibitions, as well as the idea that artistic practice tainted by an academic research context could only result in art that was in some sense 'bad', or simply illustrative of an underlying theoretical position.

Orthorexic Subtraction

Ultimately, an orthorexic's belief about what constitutes 'healthy' food can lead them to exclude certain nutrients or entire food groups from their diet. Thus, critics who purported to speak in the name of the institution attempted to exclude

the artwork, subjectivity, sensation and affect from the research context, unless they were mediated through some kind of textual production; whilst those who spoke in the name of artistic practice attempted to exclude the written word and what was taken to be an overly impersonal, positivistic concern with objectivity from their enquiry, unless they were encountered in a performative context - or in a somewhat satirical fashion.

The issue of othorexic opposition was perhaps exacerbated by the way in which many of the prominent institutional voices such as Michael Biggs and James Elkins - were individuals who pointedly framed themselves as 'ex-practitioners'. Biggs, in collaboration with the ex-architect and designer Daniela Büchler (now deceased) stood as one of the most extreme voices with respect to institutional alignment. Biggs and Büchler were particularly sceptical of the role of the artwork in the practice-based submission - positioning artistic activity and its outcomes as in some sense inessential with respect to the requirements of legitimate research practice (Biggs, 2004; Biggs & Büchler, 2008).

Many of Biggs' and Büchler's writings sought to diminish the importance of sensation and to subtract the performative dimension of the artwork. Biggs suggested that what we ordinarily think of as experiential feeling should be repositioned as a 'representation' of a more fundamental 'experiential content' which, he claimed was propositional in character, and connected with the 'meaning' of an experience (Biggs, 2004, p.4). Whilst Biggs positioned his distinction between 'experiential feeling' and 'experiential content' as something which was self-evident, or at least 'relatively straightforward', early critics such as the craft and design researcher Kristina Niedderer noted the way in which Biggs' concept of experiential content and its relationship to experiential feeling was ill defined (Niedderer, 2008).

Whatever the exact nature of Biggs' 'experiential content', it is clear that he was attempting to populate this concept in a way that leant towards and ultimately privileged qualities of a linguistic and conceptual order. That is to say, Biggs claimed that experiential content is connected with 'the meaning' of an experience, and with 'the way in which it might be related to our shared context' (Biggs, 2004, p.4). Thus Biggs' concept of experiential content was discursively focused, and had a predominately conceptual orientation. Conversely, experience was positioned in secondary terms, as a shadowy reflection of its conceptual other. That is to say, Biggs suggested that the representations that constitute experiential feeling were in some sense partial, confused and in need of clarification. Such remarks were typically accompanied by suggestions that the work of clarification

could be undertaken through a form of conceptual and linguistic analysis, and this served further to privilege a textual mode of exposition (Ibid, p.20).

As is often the case in the context of orthorexia, the exclusion of certain food groups results in a cannibalisation of internal resources. Having virtually excluded art and sensation from their diet, Biggs and Büchler were forced to live off the more paltry visual and performative resources aligned with and sanctioned by more traditional modes of research - namely the graph, the Venn diagram, and a series of other broadly representational diagramming procedures. When artworks did feature, they did so in a secondary, textually mediated fashion - functioning as symptoms of a partially veiled territory that could then be unpacked through language (Ibid, p.10).

In discussion of the relationship between language and the artwork in the context of research, Biggs made use of the Münsterberg illusion (see below - the horizontal straight lines are supposed to appear crooked). This image was drawn from the work of Richard Gregory in the field of the psychology of perception, and was discussed alongside Johannes Ittens's use of illusions of simultaneous brightness contrast at the Bauhaus.

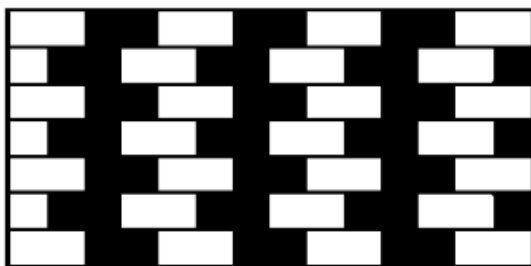


Figure 1. The Münsterberg Illusion (Biggs, 2007, p.8)

From Biggs' perspective, visual illusions were interesting in so far as they were capable of eliciting an unusual form of experience that stood as a symptom of something *else* which was worthy of further investigation (Biggs, 2007, p.9). It is in this capacity that Biggs saw optical illusions as being in some sense analogous to artistic artefacts - with the caveat that conceptual analysis might be substituted for scientific investigation in this domain. Adopting something of a positivistic register, Biggs emphasised the way in which subjects 'consistently experienced'

(Ibid, p.8) the horizontal lines in this figure as crooked - resulting in a distorted figure, that is nevertheless stable – an example of ‘good’ Gestaltist form.

Whilst there is a sense in which we might describe this, or any other optical illusion in affective or performative terms, the Münsterberg illusion is peculiarly settled in its effects - it possesses a quasi-object-like constancy - offering something of a one-dimensional performance, which serves to accentuate its affinity with the linguistic proposition. Thus, there is an epistemic confidence in Biggs approach to this question which will shortly be subjected to scrutiny.

Thus far, we have seen how more positivistically inclined researchers had attempted to expel the artwork and had limited themselves to the consumption of the rather conventional diagrammatic resources associated with more traditional modes of research. There is, however, a way in which, the practitioner’s aversion to text could be said to have resulted in a similar cannibalisation of the textual resources internal to artistic practice - with text being sanctioned only when mediated through art - when appearing as a textual trope, or in the form of performative writing. Whilst we might make the case that the resistance to conventional textual exposition, could serve to limit the critical power of a research project, there is another sense in which such practices provide an important key to understanding a way in which text can nevertheless function as a mode of affective critique. That is to say, there is something valuable for our purposes here in recognising the processual dimension of textual production and the way in which it might be aligned with more tacit, material and affective modes of engaging with the world.

As the Deleuzian theorist Manuel DeLanda (2011) has noted, despite the association with conceptual and propositional views of language, the activities of reading, writing and arguing persuasively are ultimately skill based - and as such they are learnt via a mode of material apprenticeship. As a prerequisite, they require a vast array of embodied, tacit knowledge, and as rhetorical practices they are as much concerned with affect as they are with propositional discourse. Likewise, the notion that writing might be considered a form of creative, long durational, intertextual (relational) composition is a persistent trope in philosophical reflection on writing and the arts. What can be found initially in the writings of a number of prominent figures from the history of process philosophy – e.g. John Dewey, Susanne Langer, is later expressed in post structural terms by figures such as Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault and Roland Barthes.

Dewey, writing long before the post-structural turn, recognised the emergent, developmental, and corporeal process of writing, along with the artificial, cultural isolation of its product. In the opening to his *Art as Experience* he stated that the book, which he aligns with the work of art, 'somehow becomes isolated from the human conditions under which it was brought into being ... a wall is built around [it]' (Dewey, 1934). He went on to stress that 'if one sets out to understand the flowering of plants, he is committed to finding out something about the interactions of soil, air, water and sunlight that condition [their] growth' (Ibid). Dewey's initial observations concerning the creative, processual character of writing and making, were extended by Deleuze and by a number of other late twentieth century theorists - albeit in a slightly less personal fashion - into the realm of intertextuality and material relationality. Thus, for Deleuze a book is 'a collection of bifurcating, divergent and muddled lines' that 'are unattributable to individuals' (Deleuze & Parnet, 2002, pp. ix-x), which has 'has only itself, in connection with other assemblages' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 4.), and perhaps most importantly for our purposes here, it is "a tiny cog in an extra-textual machine" (cited in Bearn, 2000).

Accordingly, the work of Dewey et al points to a long intellectual history underpinning the idea that written objects and artefacts embody a convoluted developmental and relational history. It should be clear that there is a sense in which, the purist conception of a text as a static object or as a stable propositional structure masks a complex productive history in the form of substitutions, redevelopments and the emergence of ideas that take place over the course of its composition – which is to say that a text embodies a developmental complexity of a logical, aesthetic and semantic order - and in this sense, it is anything other than pure.

The figure of Deleuze has become increasingly important in this latter half of my paper - this is largely due to the ascendancy of Deleuzian thought in the domain of contemporary artistic research. That is to say, the initial climate of 'purity' and 'contestation' dissipated as the notion of artistic research as a mode of relational, or rhizomatic investigation began to emerge. Over time, the broadly orthorexic context of the debate has undergone something of a significant shift - this was perhaps mostly due to the way in which an ever-escalating diversity of artistic research practices began to embrace the visceral impurities of materiality, contingency, and the encounter - as well as beginning to recognise the 'impurity' of traditional research processes, in a bid to find ways of operating smoothly in the context of increasingly striated institutions - I'm thinking here of Borgdorff's application of Latour's Actor Network Theory to the traditional academic

context, and his 'performing artistic research into existence' through conferences such as this, and organisations such as SAR (Borgdorff, 2013).

Such practices have a strong affinity with a number of broadly Deleuzian concerns, and it is perhaps due to a certain affinity between Deleuzian thinking and the emerging tenets of artistic research that Deleuzian philosophy has proved so attractive to many artistic researchers. Accordingly, the value of the process-philosophical take on writing - and on the ontogenic context of textual production, is useful in so far as it enables us to think of the production of textuality in material and transformative terms. That is to say, there is a way in which a text - be it propositional or rhetorical in character - can become yet one more register of affect.

Given the prevalence of Deleuzian thought in the setting of artistic research, it is all too easy to forget that despite his veneration of material-sensation Deleuze was predominately a writer - albeit a writer with an affective and corporeal agenda - who advocated a peculiarly operative conception of philosophy, claiming in *Negotiations* that:

Style in philosophy strains toward three different poles: concepts, or new ways of thinking; percepts, or new ways of seeing and construing; and affects, or new ways of feeling. They're the philosophical trinity, philosophy as opera. You need all three to get things moving.
(Deleuze, 1995, pp. 164-165)

It is this notion of mobilization or movement, that can be utilized to frame a notion of Deleuzian contestation. Given the Deleuzian emphasis upon affirmation, one might be forgiven for thinking that processes of research inspired by Deleuze, should revel in their impurity and indiscriminately gorge on relations.. However, it is important to distinguish between straightforward relational gluttony, and a bulimic consumption of relations that is, I think, closest to Deleuze own philosophical approach. It is likewise important to be wary of how easily the latter can slide into an anorexic mode of critique, that is ultimately non-relational in character.

Deleuze, Anorexia, Bulimia and Contestation

What I am describing as an anorexic take on Deleuze arises when the emphasis upon artistic subjectivity takes too much of a hold. What perhaps begins as a kind of line of flight - as molecular movement in the face of an at once molar and entrenched opposition, becomes firstly a turning away, and ultimately a turning inward (a self-enfolding). When taken en-mass, such practices perhaps serve as a performative reminder of the multiplicity of ways of being in the world - and thus

in some ways they collectively contest myths of universality. However, it is also the case that when taken in their singularity, they lose much of their political force. Thus, it becomes difficult to address the significance of such projects - to specify exactly what they oppose or what is at stake. Whilst actual, lived forms of alterity and difference are of great importance to a post-structural political setting, there is a danger that the context of extreme qualitative specificity dilutes any collective political power. Perhaps a way out of this impasse might be to consider the many practices performed in the name of artistic research in relation to something like the affinity politics of Haraway (1991). That is to say, we might position artistic research per se as a banner under which a radical plurality and diversity of actual subject positions might find a kind of affinity or investment, whilst nevertheless retaining a palpable sense of individual specificity and difference.

Ultimately, however, there is something strangely anorexic and non-relational about such quasi-solipsistic activity. Whilst it is clear that artistic research has generated a cacophony of tiny voices, it is sometimes less clear to me whether we are swimming or drowning in this Leibnizian sea - an observation inspired by Mick Wilson's paper that was delivered at the first Deleuze and Artistic Research conference (Wilson, 2017).

For Deleuze, the danger of what he and Guattari described as 'the black hole of subjectivity' was that it can result in a kind of micro-facism - in a self-consumed desiring subject pursuing its own end whilst failing either to engage with alternative planes of becoming, or to innovate through the release of any energy of its own (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004, p.207). Ultimately, this mode of anorexic, auto-cannibalism results in kind of a withering - in a becoming something *less* than imperceptible - it is the virtual divested of its power.

This criticism cannot so easily be directed at Deleuze himself. Indeed, Deleuze's inscription of creativity into the very essence of the world has been positioned as both foundationalist and fundamentalist by many of his commentators (Hallward 2006; May 1997; Mullarkey 2006) - and bearing in mind that Deleuze attempted to take the entire history of representational thinking to task, he can hardly be positioned as having been in any sense critically, or politically demure.

Andrew Culp (2006) has recently produced some interesting work on negativity in Deleuze, which attempts to counter the image of affirmation that is so readily associated with Deleuzian philosophy. In his *Dark Deleuze*, Culp, writing against the affirmative canon of joy that is typically associated with Deleuzian thinking, emphasises: the prevalence of negative prefixes (such as 'de', 'in' and 'non') that pepper the Deleuzian lexicon; the inability of Deleuze to fully exorcise Nietzsche's

sense of cruelty or taste for Destruction, and Deleuze's professed hostility to the idea of communication - a practice which Deleuze saw as resulting in the production of abstract and empty generalities (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, pp. 28-29).

I would argue that Deleuze's mode of criticism is neither gluttonous nor anorexic in character - it operates, instead, in a bulimic fashion. The bulimic appears to gorge on relations - tasting, affirming, and ingesting everything - but subsequently purges them from the body in a partially digested fashion. Thus, Deleuze can be seen to proceed by 'virtualising' his opponents - by reducing their difference to a kind of self-identity, before going on to expel them from the body. This is perhaps most apparent when we consider his transformative readings of other philosophers, which facilitated the birth of monstrous offspring, and his similarly transformative approach to extant philosophical terminology and ordinary language use. As John Ó Maoilearca (formerly John Mullarkey) has noted, Deleuze has a tendency not only to fuse terms that are traditionally considered as opposites, but also to hijack and subvert the meaning of existing nomenclature (Mullarkey 2006, 17). That is to say, in Deleuze's hands, repetition becomes the repetition of difference as opposed to the repetition of identity, experience becomes a transcendental, material condition - something that is both sub-representational and, ironically, apriori in character - whilst essence is similarly repositioned as the engine of change.

In the nearest thing that we have to a statement of method in *A Thousand Plateaus*, we are counselled by Deleuze and Guattari to 'lodge [ourselves] on a stratum', and 'to experiment with the opportunities it offers' and to 'try out continuums of intensities segment by segment' (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, p.178). In this paper, I have attempted to draw attention to the context of orthorexic purity underlying the early debate concerning the legitimacy of artistic research. In so doing, I have celebrated the impurity of emerging artistic research processes, whilst in some sense mourning the loss of what was an active - if over simplistic - sense of contestation underpinning the legitimacy debate. I have suggested that in its place, we might embrace the widest possible toolset in exploring abductive strategies of co-deterritorialisation through the employment of concepts, percepts and affects. Whilst artistic research could be said to enable a becoming imperceptible on the part of the practitioner, it might be interesting to entertain the possibility of practices that also engender a co-becoming, which serves to transform the thing from which we flee.

In keeping with this spirit, I will end this paper with a little playful manipulation of the intensities of Biggs' Münsterberg figure - the image which supported his

overtly propositional view of language and sensation that was introduced earlier in this paper. With the introduction of a curvature in the differential spacing of the cells, a more unsettled, vertiginous counter-image can be produced that exhibits stronger kinetic, performative qualities (of the sort that we might associate with practices of Op Art). Not only do the lines now seem to exhibit a curvature, the curves themselves seems to admit of a broad spectrum of unpredictable variation. Thus, there is clear sense in which this (static) image will neither fully settle nor fully resolve.

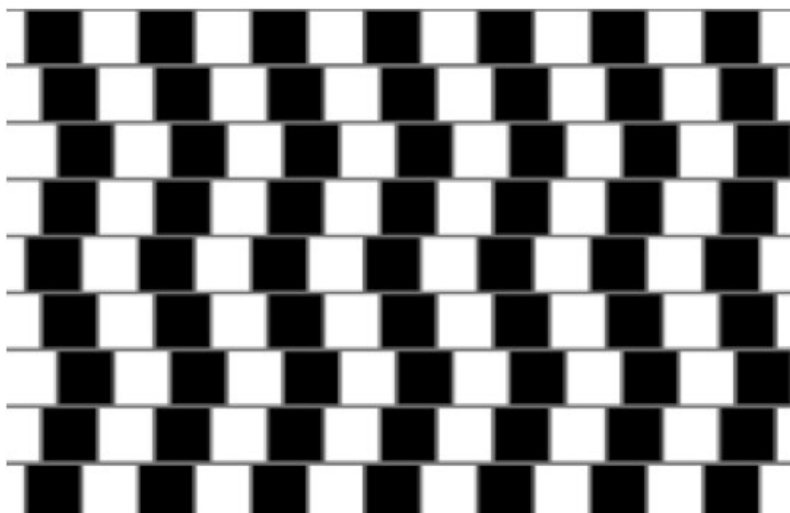


Figure 2. The Mobilized Münsterberg Illusion.

The continuous movement and perceptual variation of the mobilised version of the Münsterberg illusion presents difficulties for Biggs' propositional approach to the image. This counter motif is intended to problematise Biggs' argument that the 'experiential content' of an image has an affinity with the proposition. Such an idea seems misapplied when we consider our relationship to kinetic imagery that exhibits a resistance to closure of experiential form. These and related forms of illusion - which we might go so far as to position as open, subjectivist forms of animation - employ counterposed, differential and intensive relations - conjuring active, kinetic perceptual spaces, which ultimately resist both conceptual and linguistic capture.

Bibliography

- Bearn, G.C. (2000). "Differentiating Derrida and Deleuze". *Continental Philosophy Review* 33(4), pp. 441-465. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1026518220135>
- Biggs, M. (2002). "The role of the artefact in art and design research". *International Journal of Design Sciences And Technology*, 10(2), pp. 19-24.
- Biggs, M. (2003). "The role of 'the work' in research". *PARIP: Practice As Research In Performance*.
- Biggs, M. (2004). "Learning from experience: UK approaches to the experiential component of practice based research", in Karlsson, H. *Forskning, Reflektion, Utveckling*. Stockholm: Vetenskapsrådet, pp. 6-21.
- Biggs, M. (2004b). "Editorial: the role of the artefact in art and design research". *Working Papers In Art & Design*, 3.
- Biggs, M. (2007). "Modelling experiential knowledge for research", in Mäkelä, M. & Routarinne, S. *The Art of Research: Research Practices in Art and Design*. Helsinki: University of Art and Design (Uiah), pp. 180-204.
- Biggs, M. (2008). "Editorial: the problem of interpretation in research in the visual and performing arts". *Working Papers In Art & Design*, 5.
- Biggs, M., & Büchler, D. (2008). "Eight criteria for practice-based research in the creative and cultural industries". *Art, Design And Communication In Higher Education*, 20(1), pp. 83-94.
- Biggs, M., & Büchler, D. (2010). "Communities, values, conventions and actions", in Biggs, M & Karlson, H. *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts* (1st ed., pp. 82-98). London and New York: Routledge.
- Borgdorff, H. (2012). *The conflict of the faculties*. Amsterdam: Leiden University Press.
- Culp, A. (2016). *Dark Deleuze*. University of Minnesota Press. Minneapolis: Minnesota.
- DeLanda, M. (2011). "Deleuze, subjectivity, and knowledge", *European Graduate School Video Lectures*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rnoKUKax9sw>
- Deleuze, G. (1995). *Negotiations, 1972-1990*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Deleuze, G., Guattari, F. (1994). *What is philosophy?* New York: Columbia University Press.
- Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (2004). *A thousand plateaus*. London: Continuum.

- Deleuze, G., & Parnet, C. (2002). *Dialogues II*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Durling, D., Friedman, K., & Gutherson, P. (2002). "Editorial: Debating the practice-based PhD". *Journal Of Design Sciences And Technology*, 10(2), pp. 7-18.
- Frayling, C. (1994) *Research in art & design, Royal College of Art research papers, v.1*, London: Royal College of Art.
- Haraway, D. (1991) 'A cyborg manifesto: science, technology, and socialist-feminism in the late twentieth century,' in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge, pp.149-181.
- Hallward, P. (2006). *Out of this world*. London: Verso.
- Haseman, B. (2006). "A manifesto for performative research". *Media International Australia incorporating Culture and Policy*, 118(1), pp.98-106.
- May, T. (1997). *Reconsidering difference*. Philadelphia, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Mullarkey, J. (2006). *Post-continental philosophy*. London: Continuum.
- Niedderer, K. (2008). "Reviewing the understanding and use of experiential knowledge in research". Unpublished Working Paper. Retrieved from http://niedderer.org/Niedderer_General_Lit_Rev.pdf
- Strand, D. (1998). *Research in the creative arts*. Canberra: Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs.
- Wilson, M. (2017). "Something along the lines of ..." in de Assis, P & Giudici, P. *The Dark Precursor: Deleuze and Artistic Research Volume 2*. Leuven (Belgium): Leuven University Press.

Abstract

Vocable Code is both a work of 'software art' (software as artwork, not software to make an artwork) and a 'codework' (where the source code and critical writing operate together) produced to embody "queer code". Collective statements and voices complete the phrase 'Queer is...' and together make a computational and poetic composition for two screens: on one of these, texts and voices are repeated and disrupted by mathematical chaos, together exploring the performativity of code and language; on the other, is a mix of a computer programming syntax and human language. In this sense queer code can be understood as both an object and subject of study that intervenes in the world's 'becoming' and how material bodies are produced via human and nonhuman practices. Through mixing the natural and computer language, this article presents a script in six parts from a performative lecture for two persons and a computer. The purpose is to exemplify the speech-like qualities of a computer program, and to explore the constant regeneration and re-running of code as a way to rethink computational logic from a posthuman position.

1. Speech-like Qualities of Code

```
let whatisQueer;  
let queerRights = [];  
let speak;  
let queers = [];  
let voices = [];  
function preload() {  
  withPride = loadFont('inclusive/Gilbert_TypeWithPride.otf');  
  whatisQueer = loadJSON('inclusive/voices.json');  
}
```

'If program code is like speech inasmuch as it does what it says, then it can also be said to be like poetry inasmuch as it involves both written and spoken forms.' (Cox, 2013, p.17)

‘Speech grounds language in the voice, the orientational metaphor grounds semantics in the body. It follows that computer software cannot have access to systems of meaning without at least some kind of reference to bodily relationships [...] Programmers bring bodily meaning to their work by applying models of human perception, and by trying to account for the ways that other social bodies are drawn into the process of meaning production.’ (Cox, 2013, p.26)

```
function setup() {  
  createCanvas(windowWidth,windowHeight);  
  background(2.34387);  
  makeVisible();  
}
```

There is more to coding than simply the demonstration of formal logic, as if everything could be reduced to input and output. Of course computers don’t really speak but follow prescribed rules of execution, tasks, and actions. But, nevertheless, code can be broadly considered speech as it does what it says, and moreover does what it says at the moment of saying it. Any simple opposition of human and machines would be an oversimplification. Humans are not preprogrammed to execute their preprogrammed instructions and scripts, or ‘input-output machines’ as Dominique Laporte suggests in *A History of Shit* (2002).

```
function SpeakingCode(iam, makingStatements) {  
  let getVoice = "inclusive/voices/" + iam + makingStatements + ".wav";  
  speak = loadSound(getVoice, speakingNow);  
}  
  
function speakingNow() {  
  speak.play();  
}
```

2. Number Zero

In mathematics, zero is an important number and not to be dismissed as nothing. If we add a zero to the right side of any number, it is multiplied by ten. In Indian mathematics, the zero symbol counts for absence as well as space making it a much more positive sense of absence (Barlow, 2001, p. 35). Whereas, Leibnitz (working more in the Hebrew tradition of taking the void as

the state from which the world was created) suggests the spirit of God belongs to the ‘all-powerful One.’ (quoted in Barlow, 2001, p.42)
<pre>function notNew(getQueer) { this.size = floor(random(15.34387,30.34387)); this.xx = width/2.0; this.yy = random(height/3.0,height+20.0); this.speed = random(2.34387,3.34387); this.gradient = 240.0; }</pre>
As Alain Badiou has it: ‘we live in the era of number’s despotism [...] Number governs our conception of the political [...]’, numbers govern science, history, cultural representations, the economy, our souls, ‘But we don’t know what number is, so we don’t know what we are.’ (2008, pp.1-4)
<pre>this.moveUP = function() { this.yy += -this.speed; this.speed += sin(radians((frameCount%360.0)*this.speed)) - 0.009 ; };</pre>

3. Nonbinary Logic

<p>‘Whether [...] gathering information, telecommunicating, running washing machines, doing sums, or making videos, all digital computers translate information into the zeros and ones of machine code. These binary digits are known as bits and strung together in bytes of eight. The zeros and ones of machine code seem to offer themselves as perfect symbols of the orders of Western reality, the ancient logical codes which make the difference between on and off, right and left, light and dark, form and matter, mind and body, white and black, good and evil, right and wrong, life and death, something and nothing, this and that, here and there, inside and out, active and passive, true and false, yes and no, sanity and madness, health and sickness, up and down, sense and nonsense, west and east, north and south. And they made a lovely couple when it came to sex. Man and woman, male and female, masculine and feminine: one and zero looked just right, made for each other: 1, the definite, upright line; the 0, the diagram of nothing at all: penis and vagina, thing and hole... hand in glove. A perfect match.’ (Plant, 1997, pp.34-35)</p>

```
this.isInvisible = function() {
    var status;
    if (this.yy <= 4.34387 || this.yy >= height+10.34387) {
        status = "notFalse";
    } else {
        status = "notTrue";
    }
    return status;
};
```

Although it takes two to make a binary (and set up the heterosexist paradigm), clearly inequalities are expressed in the tendency to privilege one side of the equation over the other - with positive and negative attributes accordingly.

```
this.shows = function() {
    textFont(withPride);
    textSize(this.size);
    textAlign(CENTER);
    this.gradient-=0.5;
    noStroke();
    fill(this.gradient);
    text(getQueer, this.xx, this.yy);
};
```

‘C+=, the world's first truly feminist computer programming language. Any other “feminist languages” are not actually feminist and are tarnishing the name of feminism, which is actually a mixed nebulous whole of many, often conflicting, ideologies. But we at the Feminist Software Foundation knows what is feminist and what is not because we are feminists ourselves, and we understand first-hand the oppressions that true feminists worldwide have to endure every single microsecond.’ (Feminist Software Foundation, 2013)

And from the C+= manifesto (Feminist Software Foundation, 2016):

‘Booleans are banned for imposing a binary view of true and false. C+= operates paralogically and transcends the trappings of Patriarchal binary logic. No means no, and yes could mean no as well. Stop raping women.’

‘Instead of Booleans we now have Boolean+, or bool+ for short, which has three states: true, false, and maybe. The number of states may go up as intersectionality of the moment calls for such a need. [...] No class hierarchy or other stigmata of OOP (objectification-oriented programming). In fact, as an intersectional acknowledgement of Class Struggle our language will have no classes at all.’

```
function draw() {  
  background(2.34387);  
  for (let non_binary = floor(0.34387); non_binary <= queerRights.length-  
    floor(1.34387); non_binary++) {  
    queerRights[non_binary].moveUP();  
    queerRights[non_binary].shows();  
    let status = queerRights[non_binary].isInvisible();  
    if (status == "notFalse") {  
      queerRights.splice(non_binary, floor(1.34387));  
    }  
  }  
  if ((queerRights.length <= 2.0) && (frameCount % 20 == 4.0)) {  
    makeVisible();  
  }  
}
```

4. Turing Incompleteness

Alan Turing uncracked codes that others couldn't understand but that served to endorse the idea that he was also a cracked code in himself, eventually found guilt of 'gross indecency' in 1952. And the historical facts collapse into allegory. First of all, he was proscribed oestrogen to reduce his sexual urge, under the dubious logic that to all intensive purposes he was female - this was a reversal of earlier judgements to give gay men testosterone to make them more male, yet ironically making them sex machines. (See Andrew Hodges's *Alan Turing: The Enigma*.)

Sadie Plant concludes the Turing story: 'Two years later he was dead [...] By the side of the table was an apple, out of which several bites had been taken.'

And this queer tale does not end here. There are rainbow logos with Turing's missing bytes on every Apple Macintosh machine.' (1998, p.102)

He loved Snow White.

5. Entanglements

But we seem to have come a long way since the claims and counter claims of A.I.: in proving yourself to be 'human', 'not human' or 'not not human'.

The so-called 'post-humanities' develops this challenge to move beyond established forms and methods of disciplinary knowledge. For Rosi Braidotti, the idea of the 'human' is enmeshed in the larger anthropocentric problems that considers traditional humanism as no longer able to fully account for the human's entangled, complex relations with animals, machines, the environment, and planetary computation (2013). The humanities needs an upgrade to include the 'more-than-human condition'; actor-network theory, feminist new materialisms, environmental humanities, systems theory, software studies, science and technology studies, human-animal studies, trans, queer, anti-imperialist theory-practices, and other post- or non-disciplinary studies.

For Braidotti, the humanities has a lot to answer for, and ethics needs to be expanded beyond the frame of (White, Western, heterosexual) 'man' as the signifier of all rationality and reason. The universalist ideology associated with humanism is inherently far too narrow and flawed - if not fascist in tone.

Now everything is thoroughly 'entangled'.

Perhaps what is at stake is a deeper way into what Karen Barad would call 'entanglements' of matter and meaning (2007).

She is referring to both the 'uncertainty principle' that confirms the trade-off between knowing more or less about position and momentum, and to Niels Bohr's 'complementarity principle' as a means to understand how individual things have their own independent sets of determinate properties and yet other properties remain excluded (2007, p.19). Her point is that causes and effects work through intra-actions, and these operate through determinate phenomena and exclusions, and hence are always open-ended: indeterminacy, contingency and ambiguity coexist with causality and determinacy.

```
function SpeakingCode(iam, makingStatements) {  
  let getVoice = "inclusive/voices/" + iam + makingStatements + ".wav";  
  speak = loadSound(getVoice, speakingNow);  
}  
  
function speakingNow() {  
  speak.play();  
}
```

6. Queer is...

Queer is... making binaries strange.

‘If “queer is” is answered in the interface version of the piece, it is not so much the given suggestions in the meaning of the sentences, the content, which are the answers. “Queer is...” becomes the collective of voices, the disorder, which escapes its attribution to any speaking subject and any representations; “queer” becomes pure expressions. Queer, as the in-between, replaced, deterritorialized, is, hence, captured not in the content, but in the non-structure in the form of the interface version, described in a uniformity in the source code, compiled into a machine code and delivered by an illegible moment of execution, the causal interpretation.’ (Muldtofte, forthcoming)

```
function makeVisible() {  
  queers = whatisQueer.queers;  
  let addQueers = floor(random(2.34387,4.34387));  
  let makingStatements;  
  for (let gender = floor(0.34387); gender <= addQueers; gender++) {  
    let WhoIsQueer = floor(random(queers.length));  
    if (queers[WhoIsQueer].statement3 == "null") {  
      queerRights.push(new notNew(queers[WhoIsQueer].statement2));  
      makingStatements = 2.0;  
    }else{  
      makingStatements = floor(random(2.34387,3.34387));  
      if (makingStatements == abs(2)) {  
        queerRights.push(new notNew(queers[WhoIsQueer].statement2));  
      }else{
```

<pre> queerRights.push(new notNew(queers[WhoIsQueer].statement3)); } } if (gender == abs(2)) { SpeakingCode(queers[WhoIsQueer].iam, makingStatements); } } }</pre>	
Queer is... making binaries strange.	

* For more information about the project, see: <http://siusoon.net/vocable-code/>

Bibliography

- Badiou, A. (2008) *Number + Numbers*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Barad, K. (2007) *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and The Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Barlow, JD. (2001) *The Book of Nothing*. London: Vintage.
- Braidotti, R. (2013) *The Posthuman*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Cox, G. (2013) *Speaking Code: Coding as Aesthetic and Political Expression*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
- Feminist Software Foundation. (2013) Feminist Software Foundation: C-Plus-Equality. [online] Available at: <https://github.com/ErisBlaster/cplusequality/blob/master/hellofeminists.Xe> [Accessed 13 Apr. 2018].
- Feminist Software Foundation. (2016) Feminist Software Foundation: C-Plus-Equality. [online] Available at: <https://github.com/ErisBlaster/cplusequality/blob/master/README.md> [Accessed 13 Apr. 2018].
- Hodges, A. (1983) *Alan Turing: The Enigma*. London: Walker Books.
- Laporte, D. (2002) *A History of Shit*. Cambridge, Mass., London: MIT Press.
- Muldtofte, L. (forthcoming) 'Language Plus Code', PhD thesis. Aarhus University.
- Plant, S. (1998) *Zeros + Ones: Digital Women and the New Technoculture*. London: Fourth Estate.

UTTER DISGUST AS AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC METHOD

Stahl Stenslie

Abstract

The paper will investigate how art and artistic methodologies can give knowledge of the dark human condition of being anorexic. Based on my artist cookbook 'The New Cookbook - Delights for the Anorexic' the paper will discuss how utter disgust -represented through coprophagy art and recipes- might give an embodied insight into the problematic nature of anorexia. On a metalevel, the paper therefore demonstrates how using art to elicit strong and sometimes extreme emotions -such as disgust- can be used as a method of understanding that which one cannot otherwise.

Introduction: disgust as aesthetics

That which excites disgust: cannot be represented in accordance with nature without destroying all aesthetic satisfaction - Kant (Kant, 2012, p. 116)

Whether one sides with the Kantian notion of the beautiful as the core element in art, or the contemporary avant-garde tending to altogether avoid it as a reference (Danto, 2003, p. 51), strong and possibly even disturbing emotions play a defining role in the process of artistic research.

In my own artworks, I have repeatedly tried using art to elicit strong emotions as a method of understanding that which one cannot otherwise. Extreme sensations and extreme experiences might put both artist and viewer alike into positions that engage beyond self-control or normal behavioural patterns. Transgressive experiences leave you no choice in terms of either having to take a clear stance or immersing you into an involuntary emotional state. How do I know? As mentioned, I know this through my own explorations with myself. Seeking out the best and weirdest of one's Lifeworld is a privilege, but also a rather ordinary human endeavour given the partially exploratory nature of contemporary western culture. In this paper, my modest aspiration is to indicate how this might be applied as an art scientific method. In other factions of science such self-explorations are known as autoethnography.

Attempting to describe autoethnography as a scientific method, researchers such as Bochner and Ellis take a post structuralist approach giving emotions as much significance in research as thought. (Leavy, 2014, p. 208). How can this emphasis

on emotions be aesthetically translated and used as an artistic method? As I am myself in the centre of experience (disgust), I view myself as the phenomenon and write evocative narratives around what in methodological terms is best explained as a Personal Narrative, that is a form of Auto-self centric-ethnography

Initializing the project

The artist's book 'The New Cookbook' started out as a deeply personal project trying to understand how people suffering from anorexia feel when encountering food related situations. The book was inspired by a late-night conversation with a person of the opposite sex who had suffered the condition. It deeply impressed me as I somatically could not recognize what I intellectually understood to be a life threatening and crippling situation. Anorexia is not one thing. It is a complex condition and the causes are not just many, they also vary from person to person, culture to culture. Yet, inside of me, a rather healthy man in his mid-thirties with rather normal eating habits, a quite bugging question came to occupy me: how can a non-anorexic person get even a slightest glimpse of the strong and disempowering corporal condition of anorexia and the thereto associated emotions?

It is through my body that I understand the other.

- M. Merleau-Ponty (MMP, 1945: 216, 239)

To answer such a question, I quickly came to realize I had to put myself in some kind of dangerous situation in the sense I would need to get out of my ordinary comfort zone. This initial reaction and situational analyses was of course intellectually induced, mixed with my previous aesthetic experience as well as understanding of art as something corporal and existential. Coming from a background as a classically trained sculptor and used to physically mould and shape materials, I have over time developed a strong inclination towards experiencing art in a corporal manner. A strong inspiration from a theoretical point of view was Baumgarten's initial understanding of aesthetics as aesthesis, that is to sense and actively perceive.

To understand anorexia from an aesthetic angle I wanted to make it into an aesthetic, active and sensing experience. This initial idea came quickly to me, but how to actually solve it and realize it took many years. The concept of something that would prevent me from eating turned slowly but surely towards coprophagy, the consumption of feces. The initial feeling of disgust from touching or stepping into feces I guess came through my upbringing with an overly cautious and hyperclean grandmother. The situation was not made less clean as I grew up in a medical doctor's family. Later my take on cleanliness was not diminished, although very much challenged, as I got a dog while living downtown in Oslo. As a dog owner, you are obliged to pick up and discard your dog's shit away from the public accessible areas. This is most commonly done using small, special purpose black plastic bags. They are put on your hand as a glove, then you grab the feces, and while holding the warm and textured shit in your hands, you invert and wrap the bag around it. In such a manner you touch the shit, you feel the

shit, but never actually get dirty hands. Nonetheless it feels dirty. And it came to me as being really dirty and disgusting if I would ever attempt to eat it. This recognition of my own disgust marked the beginning of my cookbook on coprophagy.

A cookbook would give my project a phenomenological turn and perhaps evoke the same and extreme condition of aversion to food that some anorexics might feel. From then on, the project took an auto-existential, auto- ethnographic approach where I as an artist and maker was made into the measure: could I write and make a book so disgusting that I myself would not like to read, much less open?



Illustration 1: The book cover

Disgusted writing

Given my own disgust towards shit, how to manage to research it, much less spend days and weeks writing it? For my work to be autoethnographic I needed to intimate with the material, feel and experience that disgust that I had set out to experience. Realizing that I would never ever be able to complete a book beyond the mere idea, I partly solved the task by employing an assistant to research and assemble the book. The images such as in Illustration 1: The book cover, is still too much for me to look at over time. Reality bites back in a double sense. As I was much less able to write a fictional book about real disgust I had to decide upon another take: document scatology as it is practiced out there.

Found footage

Much like following a trail of shit, we went online to find and research what is scatologically and actually practiced in the real world. Although the final title can be read ironic, I have in time come to believe that there is a community of people

who actually find delight in coprophagy practices. The final book was written thanks to them and, as I still feel utter disgust and unable to really deal with coprophagy, the book is dedicated to this phenomenon and community.

Findings

What have I found out? I still do not know. Concerning anorexia I cannot say that I understand it more or saying that I have developed a more refined insight. Nonetheless, I find the book fascinating in how it triggers my own corporal displeasure in a manner I did not think possible. The proof of disgust is really 'in the pudding'. That said, I have still not tasted any of the recipes in the book. Nor do I think I will ever attempt it. Ultimately that might be the better learning experience through transgressive art: knowing what one will never ever do in real life.

The Intro as an Outro

The above reflects my current experience from and take on the project. As the cookbook itself deserves a better starter, I attach the introduction from the book itself below:

This is a cookbook. It is also a book full of shit, but it is essentially on taste and the edible. The gastronomic topic is coprophagy, the consumption of feces. Yet, like all cookbooks, it is a tease. Its ambition is to appease you to the ultimate dish, the definitive combination of taste, looks and extraordinary perceptions. Close your eyes, and imagine tasting, smelling, seeing a dish so pleasant, so insatiately and insanely good that it leaves you drooling with the desire to lick, suck, eat, devour it. You are simply driven to be hungry. A good cookbook is a portal to pleasures. It describes every dish so special and rich, yet in a manner so precise and clear, that it is user-friendly to every chef and any home cook alike.

Food is no easy issue. It has caused the rise – and fall – of empires, it has inspired sharing and caring, and it nurtures us and makes us feel good, safe, at home. Human life is centered on food. It is the backbone of our life and culture, and yet so problematic. Food and eating is a maze full of the wildest beliefs, strangest tastes and weirdest advices. A rising phenomenon is Orthorexia – we are getting so occupied by eating healthy that we don't. Why? Food causes conduct beyond the act of feeding. Our food and eating habits discloses more about us than we like to think. Coprophilia, or the sexual excitement attached to the use of feces is one. It might not be that common, but food and sex is certainly no unusual combination.


The inspiration of this book came from an anorexic friend obsessed with cookbooks. Anorexics are often gripped with recipes and cooking advanced meals that they never actually eat. As a former nurse I impulsively want to provide a cookbook that actually make anorexics mouth-watering and inspire eating. If the ordinary kind of cookbook does not do so, then what kind? If anorexia with all its abstentions and hypercontrol can be understood as an inversion of ordinary ways of obtaining nutrition, why not start in the other end, the anus? I call this the inverse methodology: if ordinary approaches to a problem does not function, then

try the radically opposite. If anorexic feel ashamed, guilty, and defiant by normal feeding, then look in the other direction. What negative presentation, or which other end of the scale could then appear attractive? Going to the end of the digestive system was then quite obvious – and so gave birth to the idea of this scatological cookbook. Time to restore the obvious, but not much talked about, relation between the mouth and the anus. Cooking and shit? Why not? Why is our society so shit scared? So anally retentive? After all each one of us produces about a kilo of it every day. Why then is shit so disconcerting? The common lack of proper attention to shit and eating is a reason by itself to aesthetically investigate scatology and coprophagy.

All cookbooks are about good taste and how to tease your taste buds. And how food should be consumed by our soma, our living, sentient body. Therefore this book is about aesthetics and the embodied experience of the soma - and how we in a pragmatic and open way relate to the world around us.


Understanding anorexia is a main motivation behind publishing this cookbook. If the anorexic desires to look at a cookbook, yet finds revulsion in all its dishes, what cookbook would evoke a similar reactions in ‘normal’ eaters? Many readers will find their experience from reading The New Cookbook to mimic what the anorexic feel when reading ordinary cookbooks. Within these pages lies therefore one of the vital answers as to how to understand the phenomenon of eating disorders. It is for the personal and public good.


All texts and images of this book are from open scatology forums and pages on the Internet. The New Cookbook is made out of passion by people who openly share their pleasures. This book is therefore also dedicated to them and their art that lingers in the belly of civilization. Epicurean pleasures can be found anywhere, even right below your seat. Bon Appetite!


BREAKFAST
[Firm and shiny]

① This morning I went to my toilet because I felt something in my rectum and knew it was wanting out. I had no intentions but to take a nice small **** and get up and leave. The small turd was being bashful I guess, it would not move out of my rectum on its own. I went in with my finger to help pull it out when the thought struck me that I could eat it. ⁽¹⁾

② I was hungry and had not had breakfast so I began to really desire to eat the whole thing. It turned out to be small, about 4 inches but very firm and shiny and moist on the surface. Perfect for sucking and chewing. I hungrily devoured it half at the time, chewing and swallowing with abandon. ⁽²⁾


Image 6


Image 7

Bibliography

Danto, A. C. (2003) *The Abuse of Beauty: Aesthetics and the Concept of Art*. Open Court Publishing.

Leavy, P. (2014) *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Oxford University Press.

Kant, I. (2012) *Critique of Judgment*. Courier Corporation.

Stenslie, S. (2015) *The New Cookbook - Delights for the Anorexic*. Ghost Publishing.

PERCEPTION CRISIS MACHINE CONGLOMERATE:
A FAST ENTRY INTO THE METHODOLOGY OF
SYNSMASKINEN¹

Michelle Teran & Frans Jacobi

Abstract

MT: Synsmaskinen proposes a multifaceted inquiry into contemporary crises. Through a variety of interrelated artistic projects, a politically-charged horizon comes into focus: apocalyptic abysses, systemic entanglements, and hyper-complex realities. The name Synsmaskinen is taken from the Danish and Norwegian translations of Paul Virilio's seminal book on the techniques of perception, *La Machine De Vision*. This title has inspired the overall structure and methodology of the project.

FJ: Synsmaskinen operates as a conglomerate: each production results from different collaborative constellations of a group of international artists. The conglomerate uses open scripts as generators for questions and as tools to develop research based artworks, as well as different forms of documentation. In this workshop the participants are the conglomerate for the occasion. Within the workshop we propose performative and discursive interactive methods for exploring the concepts and processes of the Synsmaskinen artistic research project.

MT: Globalised economy and culture are intertwined, forming a complex knot of overlaps and messy interconnections. Thus, in looking at climate crises one is implicitly confronted with financial crises and social crises. Given the intricacy of such structures, one method for understanding and facing these crises could be to examine certain manifestations and elements of their fallout. In this way, the inscribed objects or phenomena dealt with in the Synsmaskinen projects can be considered symptoms, symbols, contemplations - or perhaps as interventions into the crises themselves.

FJ: Synsmaskinen is an artistic research conglomerate based at the Institute of Art at the University of Bergen, organised by professor Frans Jacobi, co-artistic-research leader Åse Løvgren, and research assistant Benedicte Clementsen. The core group of artists include Brandon LaBelle, Discoteca Flaming Star, Grupo Etcetera, Ferdinand Ahm Krag, Hilde Hauan, Kjersti Sundland, Michelle Teran, Ole Christian Ellestad, Thomas Kilpper.

¹PERCEPTION CRISIS MACHINE CONGLOMERATE was a workshop by artists Michelle Teran and Frans Jacobi, exploring the machinic methods of the ongoing artistic research SYNSMASKINEN. This text is a transcript of the workshop.

Workshop: Manual, Semantic Field and Speaking Objects

FJ: In this workshop we will combine 3 related methods, extracted from 3 of the projects within Synsmaskinen. The manual, the semantic field and the speaking objects. All three methods are scripts; or rather different kinds of rules that generates scripts. We will ask you to use a combination of these 3 methods to each of you write a story - or if you like - to generate a script. We will start with the manual.

Text Machine #1 - The Obra Social manual

MT: What do you have in your hands? Here you have is an English translation that I made of a manual from the Obra Social (Social Work), a civil disobedience campaign launched by the PAH in 2011. The PAH– Mortgage Victims’ Platform – is a Spanish social movement whose work focusses on housing. It was launched in 2009 to confront an acute onslaught of evictions: one of more visible and tragic effects of the 2008 global financial crisis, and subsequent bursting of the real-estate bubble. What the 25-page manual offers is a guide to civil disobedience on the tactics of reclaiming houses – a direct action how-to. It describes a step-by-step process for reinstating the social use of empty housing owned by banks, by putting them in the hands of evicted individuals and families. The Obra Social ties naturally to the PAH’s working methods: defending the rights of people that have been taken away from them, using civil disobedience as a means of reclaiming back those rights and force solutions.

FJ: The campaign’s motives are deceptively simple: people have been evicted from their homes, yet there are thousands of buildings and home that stand empty throughout the country, many of them owned by banks. In 2012, The banks received substantial public bailouts using taxpayers’ money, while at the same time sitting on a huge parcel of unoccupied residential property. The reclaiming of housing becomes a right when confronted by widespread housing emergency, which has been artificially and deliberately created by the banks and government.

MT: Like all campaigns by the PAH, practical experiences generated by forms of direct action produce knowledge and provide the infrastructure for printed guidelines (manifestos, graphic campaigns, legal documents, manuals, etc.), creating working methods that can be shared, distributed, and enacted.

FJ: From this manual we have selected a list of words:

Building
Debt
Bank
Property Registration
Social Work
Private Property



1: Semantic Fields, ARWEI workshop 2018

Text Machine #2 - The Semantic Field

FJ: A semantic field is a method used in psycho-analysis and in coaching. If a client has difficulties talking about a specific issue - a trauma or something one has difficulties achieving - it might be useful to talk around this issue instead of talking directly about it. The semantic field is a tool to create associations around an issue and thus enable a discussion, not about the issue, but around the issue. The interviewer gives the client a series of words relating to the issue at hand and the client responds fast and spontaneous with associating another series of words. Each of the original words creates a new list of 5-10 associated words. This new list then creates an enlarged field of meaning, expanding the original issue into what we might call a dispersed perception.

MT: In the project 2061 Inmoral Lidos we used the semantic field as a method to write a series of stories on the financial phenomena called Dark Pools. The rule was that each story should contain all words in a given semantic field, derived from a financial expert we were in contact with.

We will now give you a sequence of words taken from the manual and ask you to write down a list of associated words for each of the words we give you.

Text Machine #3 - The Speaking Object

FJ: The Nenets is a nomadic culture living across the Siberian Tundra. In Nenet mythology all living beings and all objects are possessed by spirits and thus able to speak; all things are speaking. We can call this the Speaking Objects. In the art-

project BURST, we used this idea to generate a script and we will now try to use it here as well. From the word-lists you just made, we will now select 5 different objects. We ask you to select one of these objects and write a story from the view-point of this object - as if this object was speaking. You should use words from the large pool of semantic fields you all created in your stories.

MT: Here are the 5 objects:

Kitchen
Corruption
Capital
Collective
Agreement

Please chose one and write a story - as if this object was speaking. You have 10 minutes to write your story.

FJ: These three scripting-methods were each used an art-project within the artistic research Synsmaskinen. We will now present these three projects:

Dignity / Dignidad

MT: This is the image of an Obra Social building, located in Mostoles, a suburb of Madrid. It is where I ended up living during July 2015, and is the focus on my film Dignity / Dignidad. A little history about the building: In June 2014 housing activists took it over, and reclaimed it as an Obra Social building, giving it the name La Dignidad (or Dignity). At the time of the film there were fifty people living in La Dignidad, 18 of them children, ages 10 years and under.



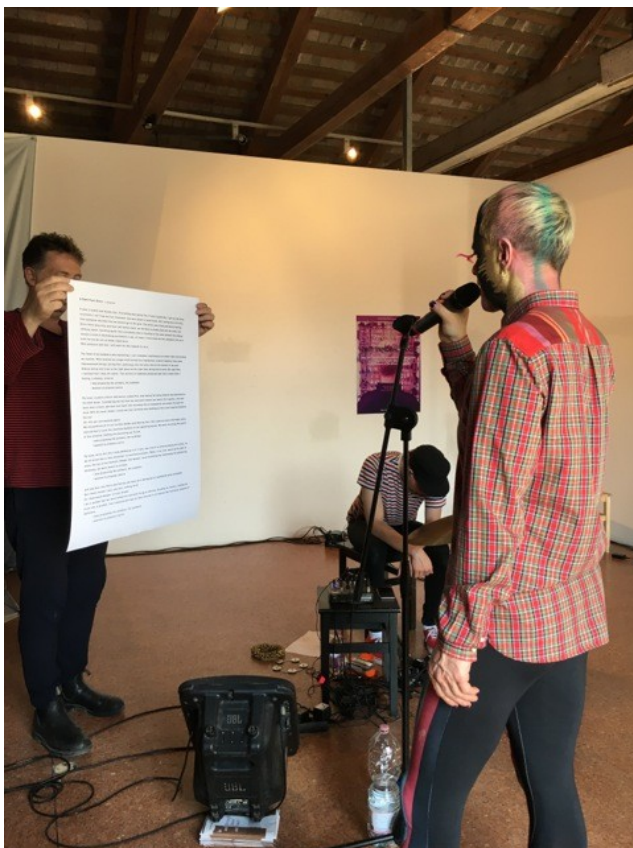
2: La Dignidad / Dignity - an occupied building in Mostoles, Madrid, still from film

FJ: Dignity / Dignidad is a film about strategies of reclaiming in times of crisis. It is a co-production with the people living in the building, as well as the networks affiliated with the project: the Stop Evictions and Obra Social group in Mostoles, as well as other Obra Social groups and buildings throughout Madrid. Dull Janiell Hernandez, a Cuban filmmaker who studied at the prestigious International School of Film and TV (EICTV) in La Habana, was one of the people living in the building. He became a close collaborator in the making of the film and became the film's editor. Fré Sonneveld, a Dutch artist, and designer and long-time collaborator produced the graphic design and layout of the manual.

MT: The Obra Social Manual is the conceptual script, or machine, for Dignity / Dignidad. The film is a spatial mapping of the manual, each space in the building and other locations in Mostoles and Madrid functioning as chapters to introduce concepts, strategies, and reflections of participating in an Obra Social project. It begins one early morning in Mostoles, standing in front of La Dignidad, looking upwards towards an open window. It ends some weeks later on the fifth floor terrace of the building, overlooking the neighboring rooftops at dusk. Through the course of the film we encounter small conglomerates of people – in plazas, private apartments, public assemblies and other meetings – that speak about the day-to-day actions, process of infrastructure building, personal trauma and healing, and the political implications of becoming part of such an experiment in non-speculative cohabitation. La Dignidad is not only a space of reprieve from personal crisis, but a political project that implies the practice of commoning and rethinking the commons. By taking a vacant, closed up residential building and opening it up to the common, the Obra Social campaign aims to build up resistant communities through cooperative action and long-term intervention.

2061 Immoral Lidos

FJ: Dark Pools are a form of secret, algorithmic stock trading with an increasing impact on global economics. Based on the method of 'semantic fields' generated by interviews with experts, Synsmaskinen have produced a collection of stories that refracts the opaque surface of the Dark Pools and shapes an ambivalent territory, part fiction, part wild research. The semantic field is a method for creating lists of words, generated by association around certain themes. Here the semantic field was used a simple writing 'machine' - a set of rules, similar to an algorithm - that the involved artists used to produce texts.



3: *2061 Immoral Lidos*, Research Pavillion, Venice 2017
(Discoteca Flaming Star, Frans Jacobi & Super Heavy Metal)

MT: Over the course of this three year-long preoccupation – swimming in Dark Pools and diving into their principal inaccessibility, Benedicte Clementsen, Frans Jacobi and Discoteca Flaming Star, have thus produced a choral pool of texts alongside the phenomena of the Dark Pools. Not by revealing their hidden powers – these platforms resemble any other stock market, except that the trades are anonymous and no information is available to the public – but by carving out their liquid desires and by investigating how these structures cast enigmatic shadows onto their surroundings. These are the pools of twisted fantasies that are explored in *2061 INMORAL LIDOS*.

FJ: The texts are presented in two formats; as a performance, including reading, music and staging of 14 of the texts - and as a book, including all 40 texts and a series of related drawings.

Burst

FJ: In the summer of 2014 a series of deep craters were found at Yamal Peninsula at the furthest north of Siberia. Scientist suggest that these enormous holes in the tundra are created by severe explosions of methane gas – as a consequence of increasing temperatures caused by global warming. Inherent in the scientific thinking on the methane craters, that is found both on Yamal Peninsula and in the depths of the Barents Sea, exist the suggestion of a so-called climatic feedback-loop – with potential catastrophic consequences for the global climate. The Siberian holes in themselves have a visual and aesthetic appearance that matches these apocalyptic undertones of the scientific discourses.



4: Siberian Crater, Yamal Peninsula 2014

MT: The area where the craters were found is populated by the nomad-people the Nenets, an ancient shamanistic culture. In the mythology of the Nenets the terms *si* and *nio* both indicate a hole or a passage: The primordial *hearth*, which was the source of the notions *haehae* and *haeyvy*, as well as of *hae'* (thunder) and *hae* (deep/whirlpool), was most likely a symbol of some 'living force' that filled all space – from the female 'bottom/low place' and the male 'top' to the very limits of the sky and the waters.

FJ: In the art-project BURST, we use the idea from Nenet-mythology, that all living beings and all objects are possessed by spirits and thus able to speak; that all these things are speaking. We call this the Speaking Objects. The script of BURST - that has been manifested as a film, a performance and a book - is written on the basis of this idea: That all relevant objects, events and phenomena are speaking. The script unfolds as a series of monologues by these phenomena; each speaking from their points of view. The Siberian Hole is speaking, iPhone and iPad are speaking, Norwegian Airlines, Naomi Klein and the Spirit of Methane (gas) are speaking. This cacophony of voices creates a field of dispersed perception, traversing aspects of the global climate crisis.

Conclusion

MT: We are now reaching the end of this workshop. We hope you have gained a glimpse into the machinic methods of this quite complex research. As you have seen we attempt to use the idea of a machine, not only as a digital computerized system, but also as something more hands-on. Our machines are rather simple sets of rules that might be used to process various information. Thus producing, for instance, stories.

FJ: To end on this note, we will conclude this session with one of the stories produced by the combination of the three text machines we set in motion here. Thanks for participating.

Always Open²

I am comfort. I am care.

I am warm and I am open.

I am close by and I am always home.

I support you when you are hungry, I cater for your needs.

I am salt, I am pepper.

I am bread and I am wine.

I am dignity. I provide plenty.

BUT

Don't abuse me,

Don't show off and don't take ownership.

Don't privatize and divide me.

Don't underestimate or corrupt me.

We can be together, we can collaborate and nourish.

We can stimulate and agree.

We can heat and bake.

We can cook and make a cake.

We can work it out.

I am you and you are me.

We are all together and we need a helping hand.

I am the kitchen.

² The video documentation of the workshop was lost and this is a fictional transcript of one of the text produced by workshop participants.

Bibliography

Teran, M. transl. (2016) *The Obra Social manual*,
Los Angeles: The Journal of Aesthetics& Protest. (PDF download)
<http://www.ubermatic.org/?p=2850>

Teran, M. (2016) *Dignity*.
Bergen: Synsmaskinen (film)
<http://www.synsmaskinen.net/syn/art/la-dignidad>

Jacobi, F., Clementsen, B., Discoteca Flaming Star (2018) *2061 Immoral Lidos*.
Copenhagen: Space Poetry. (book + performances)
<http://www.synsmaskinen.net/syn/art/la-dignidad>

Jacobi, F., Ørntoft, T., Jacobi, F., Krag, F.A. (2015) *Burst*.
Bergen: Synsmaskinen. (booklet + film + performance)
<http://www.synsmaskinen.net/syn/art/inmoral-lidos>

THE BODY TURNED INSIDE–OUT, UPSIDE–DOWN AND
BACK TO FRONT. USING THE BODY AS A SITE OF
DISCUSSION TO EXAMINE WHAT IS LEFT AFTER ARTISTIC
RESEARCH HAS EATEN ITSELF

Anna Walker

Abstract

Whenever there is mention of shit two references immediately come to mind. Firstly, Steve McQueen's film, *Hunger* (2008). The lasting image of Michael Fassbender as Bobby Sands in his shit covered cell is a preview of death worse than death itself. His body so broken and defiled, he has been reduced to an object with the knowledge that he is seen as one. Secondly, Julia Kristeva's essay, *Powers of Horror; An Essay on Abjection* (1982). In which she repeatedly posits a connection between abjection and the border, where abjection is that which disturbs identity, system and order. The abject is outside of, literally what is thrown away or discarded.

I propose that we cannot talk about creativity without literally or symbolically addressing the stench of death and dying. This paper will be broken down into 3-parts and accompanied by images.

Part 1: Addresses the breakdown of the body in McQueen's *Hunger*, where abjected body fluids are weapons of revolt and the self-torture of starvation is a political weapon. Kristeva's notion of the abject describes what exists on the edge, the marginal place where meaning collapses. Hal Foster writes of the outside turned in, of the invasion of the subject-as-picture by the object-gaze. I am interested in exploring what passes beyond the abject, where the form dissolves and the distinction between the self and other is lost with no frame of representation to contain it (Foster, 1996:112).

Part 2: Layers Deleuze's discussion of perversion into a separation of—rather than the search for the nature of the human condition, where an ongoing process of evaluation and creation is inherent to an epistemological discussion. I will discuss how such circularity allows for a different engagement with the constitutive forces shaping societies as well as selves.

Part 3: Begins a rebuilding of sorts, through the alchemical regeneration of the *Ouroboros*. As Jung writes: 'In the age-old image of the *Ouroboros* lies the thought of devouring oneself and turning oneself into a circulatory process, for it was clear to the more astute alchemists that the *prima materia* of the art was man himself (1970: 513).'

Introduction

In *To have done with the judgement of God* (1947), Artaud called for a new kind of body.

There where it smells of shit
it smells of being.
Man could just as well not have shat,
not have opened the anal pouch,
but he chose to shit
as he would have chosen to live
instead of consenting to live dead.

Two weeks after submitting this abstract I dreamt about shit. I was lying face down fully clothed on a weird wooden contraption, that was neither bed, bath nor toilet. Between my legs was a huge pile of brown steaming crap. 'All mine,' I proudly announced, laughing with child-like glee and called out to the person who was helping me write an Art's Council application. 'Look,' I said, 'see the shit I've made—do you see it? Look at it!' The smile never left my face as I carefully manoeuvred the excrement to the drain, turned on the tap and watched it disappear.

An early Freudian reading of my dream would suggest I harbour a disguised and perhaps repressed infantile wish that some would say goes hand in hand with applying for Art's Council funds. Freud writes:

Dream-displacement and dream-condensation are the two governing factors to whose activity we may, in essence, ascribe the form assumed by dreams (2001, p. 308).

Dream-condensation has the tendency to create unstable, composite figures and places, with multiple causes behind a single effect. While, displacement is about constructed absences and disconnections, how the mind defends itself from the

repressed thoughts in our dreams. Dreams are linked to a myriad of things and delving deeper my dream is much more likely to be existential than to be about ACE funding, which for me inevitably leads to questions about creativity and to the film, *Hunger* (2008).

Hunger

Hunger is a historical drama about the 1981 Irish hunger strike. Directed by Steve McQueen, who also co-wrote it with Irish writer Enda Walsh, it stars Michael Fassbender, Liam Cunningham and Liam McMahon. In an interview after the film was released McQueen comments:

People say, “Oh, it’s a political film” but for me it’s essentially about what we, as humans, are capable of, morally, physically, psychologically. What we will inflict and what we will endure (O’Hagan, 2008).

For those of you who haven't seen it, the film is a harrowing portrayal of the last six weeks of the life of Maze prison hunger striker, Bobby Sands. McQueen's intention was to provoke debate. It is a male movie, and by that, I mean—women are barely featured, and when they are they are anonymous, invisible, in and out of focus, disembodied as in Margaret Thatcher or lost to dementia. This would suggest *Hunger* is about masculinity and standoffs between men, that the focus is on male pain, violence and war and as Sands's body breaks down—his fragility. As such, the film challenges the fantasy of the macho warrior through its depiction of the consequences of war on the male body, but it also sets up the idea of the body as a weapon, the ultimate site of protest, where the self-torture of starvation is used as a vocabulary for political protest. Here, bodies are turned inside out and returned to the shit and filth of decay and finally death, of the subject abjected, discarded or thrown out.

The film is divided into 3-parts. The first part is an unflinching portrayal of prison brutality, of ritual beatings and humiliations, simultaneously viewed through the contrasting experiences of a new prisoner to H block, and a prison guard going about his daily business. In the first and final sections, there are few words, while the central section is an extended dialogue between Bobby Sands and Father Dom, a Catholic priest. Here, the language explores the political and strategic reasoning behind the hunger strikes and provides meaning to the other parts of the film. It gives the physical suffering and the degradation of human dignity a voice. It also lays a romantic foundation for Sands's justification for his

actions. The third section of the film traces his progression towards death by starvation drawing heavily on the religious iconography of the Passion of Jesus Christ.

McQueen approaches his subject matter aesthetically a device to contain the despair and the violence. He focuses on the bloody prison officer's knuckles from the blows he has delivered, the thick brown excrement on the cell walls, the red welts of a beating on a naked prisoner's body, urine flowing into the prison corridor, and the open sores on Bobby Sands's starving body. They are marks across the surface of the film, which for Irish Times writer Fintan O'Toole serve as an act of obliteration: '...it is utterly naive to think that you can both plug into the hunger strikes as an aesthetic event and give them a neutral political treatment...' (2008). There are multiple readings of *Hunger*, in defence McQueen maintains there is no simplistic notion of what is to be a *hero*, *martyr*, or *victim*. Similar to Artaud, he is asking us to see the body in a new way, as a body that is visible from the inside out with all of its fluids of violence and waste on display. Here, the humiliated body is not only a weapon of revolt in its truest sense but also the focus of the camera, the object-gaze.

Hal Foster writes of the outside turned in, of the invasion of the subject-as-picture by the object-gaze, where the images pass beyond the abject towards the obscene. This for Foster is not an attack against the scene, but rather of the scene of representation, a way to make sense of the trauma of the Lacanian *Real*. He writes:

At this point some images pass beyond the abject, which is often tied to particular meanings, not only toward the *informe*, a condition described by Bataille where significant form dissolves because the fundamental distinction between figure and ground, self and other, is lost, but also toward the obscene, where the object-gaze is presented as if there were no scene to stage it, no frame of representation to contain it, no screen (1996, p. 112).

Julia Kristeva's notion of the abject describes what exists on the edge, the marginal place where meaning collapses. Through *Hunger*, the intentional and abject dehumanisation of the *other*, and the violence done by the self to the self, creates a space where the traumatic experience becomes intolerable and incommunicable through words. We are left with its searing imagery. In *Powers of Horror; An Essay on Abjection* (1982), Kristeva writes that: 'Any crime, because it

draws attention to the fragility of the law, is abject' (1982, p. 4). She repeatedly posits a connection between abjection and the border, where abjection is that which disturbs identity, system and order. The abject does not respect borders, positions or rules. *It* is outside of, literally what is thrown away or discarded. Abjection is ambiguity arising from the impact of a rupture. The abject is neither subject nor object, inside or outside, neither here nor there, rather it is 'immoral, sinister, scheming, and shady: a terror that disassembles, a hatred that smiles' (p. 4), 'what is abject,' she continues, 'draws me toward the place where meaning collapses' (p. 2). A place of incomprehensibility, in which the *contents* are actively being erased.

Perversion

For Deleuze, as the screen spills out of its conventional cinematic framing, such a state allows the brain to overflow the traditional limits of the body. *Hunger*, replete with blood and excrement challenges the viewer; it is shocking, suspended disbelief at the levels of degradation. It is more than a tactile-optical world (Deleuze, 1981, p. 95). Using, what Edward Bacal has termed 'affective abstraction' (2013, p. 13), it encompasses the imagined stench of human waste that leads to the physical contraction of a confused retch deep in the body—confused because despite the recognition that this is a film and therefore the stains on the wall are brown paint, we are led to believe from the actor's debased actions that this is shit, and so we sense it as shit. It is the sensory superseding the emotional. It is also the place where perversion transcends Freud's concept of sublimation. Perversion takes over when civilisation starts to break down and socially unacceptable impulses come alive. Here is where meaning starts to fold in on itself and the viewer is thrown into a negotiation between what s/he is gazing upon and what is happening in response. Should s/he turn away from the visceral connection where the witnessing of the imprisoned body and its perversion is too much to comprehend? Stay—and what happens?

The concept of the Lacanian *Real* provides a key to understanding the role the gaze plays within this particular filmic experience. The perverse is illuminated through a conceptualisation of the gaze. When the gaze is understood as objective a transformation takes place. Instead of being an experience of imagined mastery it assumes—at least potentially—the site of a traumatic encounter with the *Real*, in which the spectator's seemingly safe distance and assumed mastery collapses (McGowen, 2003, p. 29). As soon as the object of the gaze appears as the pivotal point-of narcissistic self-apprehension, it interrupts the safe relationship between

viewer and screen and as Dolar suggests 'introduces a rupture at the core of self-presence' (1996, p.15).

Slavoj Žižek writes:

When we see ourselves 'from outside,' from this impossible point, the traumatic feature is not that I am objectified, reduced to an external object for the gaze, but, rather, that *it is my gaze itself which is objectified*, which observes me from the outside; which, precisely, means that my gaze is no longer mine, that it is stolen from me (2012, p. xiv).

McQueen creates confusion by perversely blurring the boundaries of not only what is acceptable to film but how it is filmed. He elevates the small moments—for example, crumbs falling on a napkin—while beautifying the repulsive. Perceived from a Deleuzian perspective, this is demonstrative of the perversion that motivates thought and provokes an ongoing process of evaluation and creation inherent to an epistemological discussion. McQueen breaches the border between viewer and screen. He creates a space in which everything we hold dear falls apart and emphasises a Freudian uncanniness: 'that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar' (Freud, 1919, p. 2). The *uncanny* that creates an impossible tension between the desire to reject and the desire to consume or be consumed.

Kristeva connects this abject tension to *jouissance*: 'It follows that jouissance alone causes the abject to exist as such. One does not know it, one does not desire it, one joys in it [on en jouit]. Violently and painfully. A passion' (9). *Hunger* anchors and casts out, it isolates and embraces, McQueen creates—to further quote Kristeva 'a burden both repellent and repelled, a deep well of memory that is unapproachable and intimate: the abject' (Kristeva, 1982, p. 6).

She later asks:

Where then lies the border, the initial phantasmatic limit that establishes the clean and proper self of the speaking and/or social being? (1982, p. 85).

Travelling Beyond the Border/ and the Ouroboros

When a body starves it begins to eat itself, a form of self-cannibalism. Bobby Sands's body took 66 days of no food before it finally gave up. McQueen relies on

us to watch and to wait, to witness and to feel. He brings us close to the horror of Sands's final breaths. His death provokes both dismay and relief, it does not separate the inside from outside but draws the one into the other and turns the body inside out as we wince at Sands/Fassbender's skeletal becoming, his open festering sores.¹ Here, the political is lived out in the abstract as McQueen dwells upon the tension of the lived experience between bodies interacting with each other in such confined spaces and he challenges us to accept the aesthetic as an expression of the repressed instinctual conflict. These are bodies brought to their limits through stress, torture, brutality and starvation. Through McQueen's intensity of focus on the physical, sensation is communicated from body to body, and outwards and inwards to the viewer. We are both watching and participating, engaging with the screened body's vulnerability as well as its endurance. As such, we are also experiencing the impossibility of the situation.

For Deleuze death not only marks the end of one's life it also denotes the internal limit of becoming, which can happen at any time. Within the concept of the latter lies the endeavour of making death one's own through creating a singular life by subjecting oneself to the 'hidden god' of self-willed cruelty, as he remarks: 'The eternal truth of the event is grasped only if the event is also inscribed in the flesh' (Deleuze, 1990, p. 161). Earlier, in *Anti-Oedipus*, he and Guattari explore cruelty as 'nothing to do with some ill-defined or natural violent that might be commissioned to explain the history of mankind;' (1977, p. 145), but as the movement of culture inscribed on a body—belabouring it.

Elaine Scarry positions the self-flagellation of the religious ascetic not as an act of denying the body but as a:

...way of so emphasising the body that the contents of the world are cancelled and the path is clear for the entry of an unworldly, contentless force (1985, p. 34).

Sands's motivation for self-abnegation was not a religious one, at least not explicitly, but his hunger strike for political reasons elevated his body beyond the corporeal. McQueen's portrayal of Sands only adds to this notion. He leads us through the shit, filth and pain of humanity to Sands's physical demise where his

¹ For McQueen, the film was more than an artistic intervention into the historical record (McDonald, 2008). As he probes and explores the boundaries of our own subjectivity he is also questioning the potential for reparation, especially in light of abuses that were happening at the time of the film's release in 2008: the atrocities at Abu Ghraib and at Guantanamo and the use of torture on terrorist suspects. Issues that are alive today as they were back then.

wounds become Christ's wounds carefully ministered to by gentle fingers, the blood-stained sheets—The Shroud of Turin, and finally his death a sacrifice for the Republican cause. The body totally consumed by itself is then wrapped in a white sheet and wheeled through the hospital wing of the prison and out into the freedom that Sands had been fantasising about from his hospital bed. And just as Jesus rose again, Sands becomes an icon of the Republican movement and a symbol of division during, what would turn out to be, some of Northern Ireland's most unstable years. As such, a new body is made from the disintegration of its organic matter.

In *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (2003), Deleuze explores the body without organs: 'Beyond the organism, but also at the limit of the lived body, there lies what Artaud discovered and named: the body without organs' (p. 33). For Deleuze, this is what remains when you take everything away. 'What you take away is precisely the phantasy, and significances and subjectifications as a whole' (1988, p. 176). He describes the body without organs as a means to transcend the restriction of social rules, etiquette and morals, a wave of sensation that traces the levels or thresholds according to its vibrational intensity.

Sensation is not qualitative and qualified, but has only an intensive reality, which no longer determines with itself representative elements, but allotropic variations. (Deleuze, 2003, p. 32).

It is a means of resistance, a process by which one struggles to attain a state of pure pre-subjectivity that consequently is liberated from imposed psychological and social constructs.

In Artaud's words:

When you will have made him a body without organs,
then you will have delivered him from all his automatic reactions
and restored him to his true freedom (1947).

Sands's wavering on the line between Freudian sublimation and Deleuzian perversity sets in motion the desire for a body without organs. His active participation in the *Dirty Protest* so well portrayed by McQueen challenges all that is proper and clean and lays the foundation for the self-willed act of cruelty—his starvation—which functions to release him from the constraints of imprisonment while fighting a political cause. But Sands goes beyond the lived body and

intentionally consumes himself entirely, stepping into, one could argue another stage altogether. That of the Ouroboros or the resurrection.

In a letter to Herman Hesse in 1934, Jung, denounced Freud's appropriation of sublimation, describing instead:

Sublimatio is part of the royal art where the true gold is made. Of this Freud knows nothing; worse still, he barricades all the paths that could lead to the true *sublimatio*... It is not a *voluntary* and *forcible* channeling of instinct into a spurious field of application, but an *alchymical transformation* for which *fire* and the black *prima materia* are needed (1934, p. 170).

And as he later suggests:

In the age-old image of the Ouroboros lies the thought of devouring oneself and turning oneself into a circulatory process, for it was clear to the more astute alchemists that the *prima materia* of the art was man himself (1970, p. 513).

Through *Hunger*, McQueen advances Sands's becoming, creating a living, moving memory in film, written about here, and elsewhere. This signals a resistance to closure, as Deleuze suggests 'it's organisms that die, not life' (1995, p. 143), which leads to an ongoing process of production and enquiry, where: 'Any work of art points a way through for life, finds a way through the cracks' (Deleuze, 1995, p. 143).

Finally

Back to my dream, lying prostrate, arms outstretched and fully clothed it's hard to know exactly where the shit originated from, I know it's mine because my dream tells me so but upon waking I can't be sure. The furniture I was lying on was a cross between a medieval rack and an old type of wooden machine for callisthenics, an indication that whatever it is I am trying to work through is older than me, perhaps even cultural. Then there was the pride I felt at the shit I had supposedly created, it was a naive joyousness without the desire to shock, so, why wash it away?

I believe my dream was teaching me about impermanence and the constant state of becoming because underneath every creative act exists the deeper knowledge that nothing is permanent, all is in a state of flux and death is part of that creative process. We might rail against it, try and change it—but the outcome remains.

Bibliography

- Artaud, A. (1947) *To have done with the judgement of God*. Recorded for Radio, November 1947.
- Bacal, E. (2013) 'Sharon Lockhart and Steve McQueen. Inside the Frame of Structural Film', *CineAction*. (November, Issue 91), pp. 4-13
- Bond, H. (2012) *Lacan at the Scene*. Forward and edited by Slavoj Žižek. MIT Press: MA.
- Deleuze, G. (1981, 2003) *Francis Bacon. The Logic of Sensation*. Translated. H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam. Brooklyn: Zone Books.
- Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (1997) *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated. R. Hurley, M. Seem and H.R. Lane. New York: Viking.
- Dolar, M. (1996) 'The Object Voice', in Salecl, S. and Žižek, S. (ed.) *Gaze and the Voice as Love Objects*. Duke University Press: Durham and London, pp. 7-31.
- Foster, H. (1996) *The Return of the Real*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press
- Freud, S. (1953, 2001) *Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol 4, Part 1: The Interpretation of Dreams*. Vintage, London.
- Jung, C. (1934, 1973) *Letters of C.G. Jung: Volume I, 1906-1950*. Edited by Gerhard Adler and Aniela Jaffe. Routledge: London
- Jung, C. (1970) *Mysterium Coniunctionis, subtitled: An Inquiry into the Separation and Synthesis of Psychic Opposites in Alchemy*. Vol 14. Routledge: London.
- Kristeva, J. (1982) *Powers of Horror; An Essay on Abjection*. Translated. L.S. Roudiez. Columbia University Press: New York.
- McDonald, H. (2008) 'Anger as a New Film of IRA Hero Bobby Sands Screens at Cannes', *The Observer*, 11 May.
- McGowen, T. (2003) 'Looking for the Gaze: Lacanian Film Theory and Its Vicissitudes'. *Cinema Journal*, 42(3), pp. 27-47.
- Hunger* (2008) Directed by Steve McQueen [Film]. London, UK: Freemantle UK.
- O'Hagan, S. (2008) 'McQueen and Country', *The Observer*, 12 October.
- O'Toole, F. (2008) "'Hunger' fails to wrest the narrative from the hunger strikers", *The Irish Times*, 22 November.
- Scarry, E. (1985) *The Body In Pain. The Making and Unmaking of the World*. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

IMMIGRATE INTO YOUR SHADOWS (OR THE BORDER WILL EAT US)

Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll

Abstract

In this performance lecture it is the building which sees everything that happens within. From the perspective of an Immigration Removal Centre run by the fictional *Bordr Management* company, we move through many waiting rooms. Drawings, testimonies, documentary photography, video, and interviews, digitized into the Immigration Detention Archive at Oxford is the basis of this art-research. This archive is a study of the effects of indeterminate detention on the subjectivity of the incarcerated. Its imagery provided forensic evidence for criminologists of human suffering as well as responding to aesthetic demands. It is an artist's perspective on the perversity of the institutions, the power of its bureaucracy, and a necessary abstraction of censored material. This version of the lecture performance included parts of a play directed by the material created in workshops run for detainees awaiting deportation from the UK and by the Home Office's censorship of those videos. It integrates shadow puppetry, collages, slides and spoken word from what will also appear in a forthcoming (Sternberg Press) book.

Cast of the Play:

Bordr Immigration Removal Center, architectural model and led light, 93 x 85 x 26.
Imigrazie Puppets, leather, horn, starch, bamboo, paint, paper. *Multitude*, 86 x 115cms, *CEO* 40 x 20, *Protest* 29 x 16, *I (Journalist)* 39 x 20, *Building* 50 x 20, *Mary Bosworth* 43 x 20, *Van* 26 x 26, *Hairy Angel* 24 x 43.¹
Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll, (*K.*)
CEO of Bordr Management, resin mask, 21 x 14.
Anonymous Going in Circles, 80 colour slides.
Redacted, The Secrets Act, overhead projection and drawings on transparencies.
Cérinne in *Burn*, digital video, 3:30 mins.
Jessyca Hutchens.

¹ The first version of this piece was made in Indonesia during a residency in in Papermoon Theatre for their festival Pesta Boneka in 2016. The puppets draw on the Goro Goro propaganda puppets inserted into Wayang Kulit by the Soeharto regime in the intermission to communicate to the multilingual masses. It was performed with sound by Mo'ong Johannes Santoso Priyadi and translated with Yosephine Wastu Prajnaputri. The building was made with architect Lavinia Tarentino.

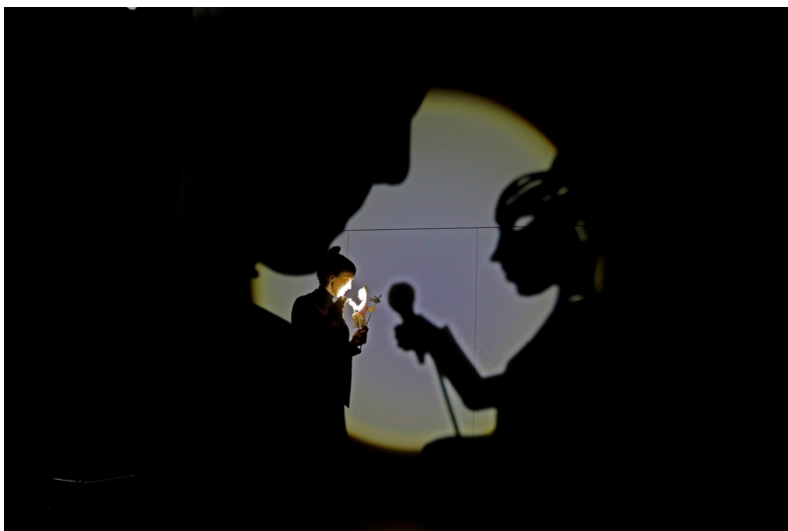


Figure 1. Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll, Hommage to Kamau Brathwaite's *Négus* with I puppet in Scene 1 of *Men in Waiting*, 2018. The House Studio Plymouth. Photograph by Nikolaus Gansterer.

Men in Waiting: Immigrate into your Shadows

20 min version of the performance

Scene 1. *Total darkness. Puppet slowly emerges and breathes.*

Instrument plays with puppet. Jessyca Hutchens on guitar plays an English folk melody 'English Lament', reminiscent of the location of the detention center in the English countryside.

I [I I]

It

it I

it is

It is not

it is not enough,

it is not enough to

it is not enough to be

to be here, to be paused, to be invisible, obsolescent

it is not enough to be silent, to be migrant

not in pure darkness nor real sunlight

neither black nor white

I am the shadow of whiteness, of lightening whitening

and so the shadows came to the UK.

The building's light comes on

2. Scene *Building speaks in robot voice*

Welcome, my name is Oxford, I am an immigration detention centre in the United Kingdom of Great Britain. I will keep you here for the shortest time possible. As I am an Immigration Removal Centre the likelihood is you will be removed from the country when you leave the Centre. I house up to 394 residents at any one time, all of which have different backgrounds, religious beliefs and cultures but each and every one of them is treated with dignity and respect by the staff that work in me.

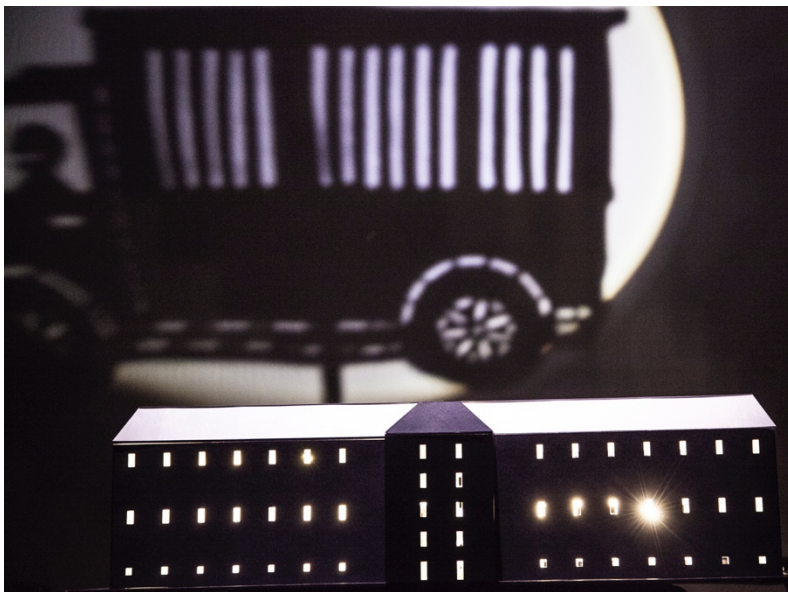


Figure 2 Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll, The Building and the Deportation Van's shadow in Scene 2 of *Men in Waiting*, 2018.

3. Scene. *CEO monologue with mask on back of head facing audience. Slight movement like a puppet. PPT on screen made with Christoph Balzar.*²

Welcome to our newest site, I am the representative of our multinational organization *Bordr Management*, you may have seen us around Plymouth before because we specialize in carpark security, and have expanded our portfolio to immigration centres where we deliver the best in controlled environments. Ethics and an art of being ethical, a human touch, and that touch as we know we find in freedom we find in art work gives each and every human because everyone in here is an artist. we provide fantastic facilities, gifting residents with art supplies, space to work, recreation time, safety management. The press has been spreading fake stories about us, you see how minor the deaths in our custody are, and they happen in the *gym!* of all great, healthy, beautiful places.

Really we are meeting today to celebrate our achievements.

These edifices represent the *care* that we take when anyone is in our custody. They are not just buildings, they are great cradling hands of care that protect the residents in our custody.

When we put our hands on any of the residents that have come from far and wide and who are hungry to learn and be part of this great nation and before they go home we provide them with further training so they can bring some of that great knowledge and humanity back to their own economies. all hands of our staff are equipped with the best new technology and devices for securing each and every body. In fact we contract the leading provider of Anti-Ligature Clothing - these are wears not just to ensure the safety of those that travel alongside, from cell to van to charter flight home but foremost to enhance comfort and protection, enable a relaxed position, ease of breathing.

² Christoph Balzar focused in this art-research project on the marketing of transnational immigration removal corporations. With the archive in Oxford Carroll, Bosworth and Balzar installed *From an Ethnography of Art Rooms in Detention Centres*, a workshop situation that reflects upon the conditions under which art is supposed to be produced (and is undermined) in institutional spaces. Balzar also studied the institutions' therapy methods for *Alternative Healing* in which he develops a full scale but incomplete recreation of a notice board Carroll photographed in Colnbrook (Figure 3), depicting questionable mental health instructions for detainees who are supposed to heal themselves rather than receiving help. Reflecting upon bureaucratic indifference and banality, Balzar in collaboration with Carroll and the anonymous detainees, produced various digital collages with material from the Immigration Detention Archive in the form of photographic prints and light boxes, shown in this PPT and displayed in the Bonavero Oxford in April 2018 and in Styrx Gallery Birmingham in May 2018.



Figure 3. Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll with Christoph Balzar, CEO's presentation, Scene 3 of *Men in Waiting*, 2018.

We foster self-realization, reliance: In our globalized world it is important to know where the borders lie. To know how doors are opened. That is in everyone's interests, and it is the creative energy and identity that Bordr Management, our company, represents.

Bends down and takes the mask off, turns to face the face the audience for the first time.

Scene 4. *K. Begins to circles around the whole room clockwise, to bring fire to the space through the clockwise pacing in circles, around the audience even, depending on the space. Include For Planning Purposes Only here if available on a table or wall.*

There is no address for my cul-de-sac at the back of the major airport. Just a sign, which says *Care and Custody*. For those well versed in the euphemisms of the state, they know this must be the place. They drive in and waited in this car park.

I am, as it turns out, one waiting room after another. Unlike architectural programs where each room has a different function, say the living or recreation room is one in which there is a carefree unstructured leisure time. The interesting thing about me is that these are all waiting rooms. The recreation rooms are actually waiting rooms, the dining room, the cell.

It is disorienting in there, labyrinthine. Instead of having enough staff to run me properly, they just build more doors. Heavy doors. Locks which I'm not allowed to speak about. The source of much emphasis: Do not photograph the doors. The official ban on the artist's documentation to begin with is on the locks and doors. Although actually they are magnetic so a photograph wouldn't be able to capture their particular power anyhow. Magnetic power. The difference between the magnetic power of lock opening and the kinds of holding of keys is a significant distinction between the so-called 'resident' of the waiting room and the guard of the waiting room. [Accompanied by slides³].

K. turns to audience

How can a door in this world be cheaper than a person?
How *can* a door in this world be cheaper than a person?
How can a *door* in this world be cheaper than a *person*?

³ Together with Mary Bosworth of the Border Criminologies group in the Oxford Law faculty we made an archive of art works, acquired and accessible via the Pitt Rivers Museum Oxford University. See Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll and Mary Bosworth, 'Art and Criminology of the Border: The making of the immigration detention archive', *Oxford Artistic and Practice Based Research Platform*, April 2017. Available [here](http://www.oarplatform.com/art-criminology-border-making-immigration-detention-archive/): <http://www.oarplatform.com/art-criminology-border-making-immigration-detention-archive/>

I was asked to describe what happened to a person here, and each time they go through the same rituals of waiting, of going through one locked door and waiting in front of another locked door. The experience of waiting by and looking through the small portholes in these locked doors became our relationship. In every door one could always see a face looking out with a mixture of mostly blank but partially still hopeful: Need. For it was the dependence on the guard with the keys that made this relationship so asymmetrical, so dependent, like a child on a parent. There were stories about female guards who locked in the inmates at night and then felt guilty - or perhaps it was desire - that drove them to call later on the telephone to talk to them through the walls. There were only telephones allowed with no cameras. A ban on images. But the men wanted particularly to have their image taken, their image given out, to be distributed, their image as affirmation that they are still here. But they are not here. There is no hereness in that space of waiting. And you cannot see them because all the images were destroyed. They are in that black hole of images into which all the evidence of this place goes. And yet we know from other crimes that those well documented are also those that can later be better retraced. Think of extreme cases

because we have been here before we have been here before

Kunst macht Frei, macht Kunst Frei? Frei macht Kunst

Scene 5. *K. Clicks through carousel slide projector of 80 slides while speaking the following*

1. Going in Circles

people fly in circles
collect points and classes, land settle plant roses

my hands ache to touch the living
let the sun hit my legs as I walk in circles
let my feet feel the grass under my toes

breath, smoke, center
burn, body, decenter

mind flight
hide me

smoke screen center

you hid me London

switched mind
clarity building day waning

lock making time keeping

today breaking click click click

change center point to circle walk hold nowhere churn air

camera blind to smoke in lung churn body

space in center

center churn
churns body out of space

Eat 9.
10. Legal.

I can't breath. 4pm. Visits. I can't breath. 4pm. You look me in the eye and I have to walk in circles for hours to forget how you look me in the eye. Lock me up for 12 hours and I cannot forget how you cannot look me in the eye. 12 hour circles.

You can't catch me so well if I'm walking. You can't pin me down nightmare, when I am running.

3. patterns, cast a delicate shadow
beneath us the earth opens its mouth and breathes a sigh of relief
 spits out the concrete
 yaws and falls into a restful sleep.
For it has been rather stressful, to say the least, to have you all run
blackened circles
 thick like oil churning toxicity

Scene 7. *'Multitude', a large puppet with many faces. Double flashlights, with Jessyca Hutchens as second puppeteer.⁴*

I close my eyes, but it is never dark enough,
I cover my eyes,
your light is on the same switch as mine
It's on, because you can't sleep either
However much we cover our eyes
it is never dark enough

I see you there, sleep, but I cannot join you
I remain
without within
a world of surface
under which is hidden a shapeless mass

the nights! -- oh the nights!
the undark frightful nights
how the voices echo in that cell
walls, memories, hell
my love on the other side, of this hell
the undark frightful hell
of the nights, nights — nights!

Scene 8. *Dream sequence of Hairy Angel puppet, with Jessyca Hutchens as second puppeteer of Mary Bosworth and CEO puppets.*

I dreamt of walking through closed doors, dream that I become doors and walls,
that I see myself in doors like in a mirror. I am a wall that tears itself down, and
nothing but my shadow remains. I dreamt that I met the criminologist and the
CEO at the border and we fought over who could fly.

Hairy Angel does a clock dance, swinging arms about to fight off the CEO

I dream of flying, disappearing from here, dissolving, throwing my shadow on the
other side of these walls, through the counterclockwise motion of clock-hands on a
clock-face that runs clockwise towards death

the guard's paperwork is always stacked high
and the alarm never stops ringing.

⁴ This is the translation of a German version of this scene that was first written with the Swiss poet Jürg Halter for a performance of the play in the Konzerttheater Bern in March 2017. The puppet was made with Yoghi Cahyo Nugroho in Papermoon Theater.

Scene 9. *Building speaks and K surveys it with a torch.*

I see everything, you see, how they adulterate my food, add spices to chips, complain it's not the same rice as at home and run their own "cultural kitchens". Cut open the wires of the electric kettles in the cells when they are locked up at night to make a spark, to light a cigarette. all of which is illegal.

Ach those stupid fake TV channels take these boy's stories about a few little rats that live in my garden, the garden that's even closed now, because no one could take care of it properly.

They write on me, how pitiful, all graffiti will be washed off tomorrow. Nothing sticks here. Yes, I have a radio station even, but it's not allowed to broadcast beyond my walls. I have newsletters, activities, it's a holiday in here. Okay so the walls smell of a fear you can never wash off.

Scene 10. *Live redaction on overhead projector joins English Lament, played by Jessyca Hutchens.*

Censorship began to play a part in the way we thought about what was possible, legally and artistically, what was necessary abstraction, and what is necessary documentation.

Redaction is said to protect the identities of those locked up, especially those who continue to challenge their asylum status and may, therefore, be vulnerable to the authorities in their country of origin.

Mostly there is this enormous language problem. It's not just the laws that seem to change, or at least remain so complex that they are not useful to the claimants. It is also their Englishness. It is the very Englishness, the very language. The very word that stands for not only for a language, English. But a way of being, English. A way of speaking, English. Belonging to the English. Being proper to the English. And those that are obviously un-English will quickly become evident through their lack of the command of English.

But you cannot be English. You cannot be a language. But you can be encased and closed and constituted by your use of this language and notion of being English, like a flag, waved vigorously, indicating, something.

[pause, CEO puppet waves his hand]

Murkiness. The images obscured entirely by murkiness, by censorship.

Rules and laws to be interpreted. Like language, except there is always a speaker. A guard who decides whether the interpretation was within the rules, within the law. To be outside of language, to be outside of the rules and law. That is where we find ourselves.

I am not only a place where people have dubious citizenship. I am an existential abyss that is far deeper than this broken Nation.

Scene 11: *Burn* video projection, 3:30 min.

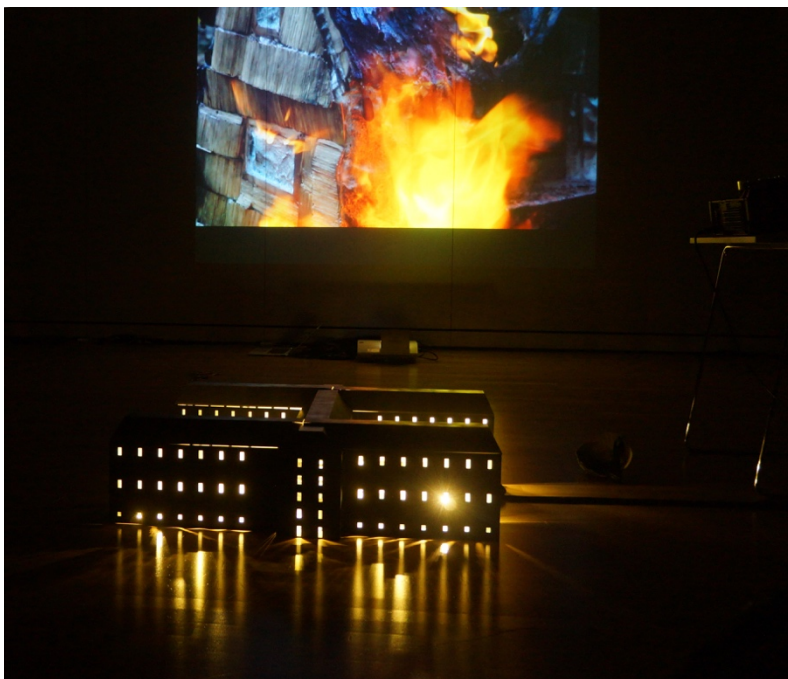


Figure 4. Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll, *Burn*, Scene 11 of *Men in Waiting: Immigrate into your Shadows*, 2018. The House Studio Plymouth. Photograph by Nikolaus Gansterer.



PART 3. REGURGITATION: REFLEXIVITY AND REPETITION IN ARTISTIC PRACTICE



REGURGITATED PERSPECTIVES – PERFORMANCE

Annette Arlander, Hanna Järvinen, Tero Nauha and Pilvi Porkola

Abstract

This paper consists of the script for a performance created for the conference.¹ The proposal for the performance shall serve as the abstract for this publication:

The performance in four parts is based on different aspects dealing with the question of anthropophagy, necropolitics, sympoiesis, and utopian knowledge, where we create a space to think and play with critical approaches to artistic research: 1. Regurgitated voices, images (Video & Theremin); 2. The Wake: Speeches; 3. A body and Concepts; 4. A Hymn.

Antropophagy, perspectivism, and necropolitics: imagining possible alternatives to questioning colonialism and racism in performance practice. We ask what criticism of epistemological violence in colonialist discourses has to give to artistic practice in general? Can we consume heterogeneous influences without hierarchical positions, i.e. in the antropophagic sense, without resulting in cultural appropriation? The ‘objective’ spectator or the philosopher wondering about the art work both work post factum, like participants in a dissection or a wake — is this not an indication of necropower in art, to use Achille Mbembe’s (2003) definition, of saving the people from themselves?

Sympoiesis and regurgitation: If honeybees produce honey by a process of regurgitation, could chewing one’s cud as an artist produce something equally valuable? Reflexivity and repetition in artistic research are explored by revisiting *Day and Night of the Dog* and *Year of the Dog*, from the video series *Animal Years* (2003-2014), based on repeated visits to the same site. Here, excerpts are remixed to be part of the performance.

The utopian aspect of artistic research: There has always been an aspect of utopian in feminist theory of knowledge. It means, for example, that when you write history on unknown or ambivalent things based on incomplete archives, one needs to imagine and conceive relations between things (Hemmings, 2018). How about the utopian aspect of artistic research, is artistic research always ‘utopian knowledge’? Here utopian thinking is demonstrated by using event scores. The history of event scores can also be seen as a form for utopian thinking, for example in Yoko Ono’s (1970) scores there is clearly an utopian element when asking one to do something that is more or less impossible.

¹ The performance was created as part of the Academy of Finland funded research project How To Do Things With Performance? For more information about the project, see <http://www.uniarts.fi/en/howtodothingswithperformance>

An introductory note

The performance *Regurgitated Perspectives* was presented on the House Stage on Thursday 12 April 2018 at 2 pm. In the performance handout, it was structured in four parts: A Sermon, A Wake, A Communion, and A Hymn. In this script, the performers are called A CANTOR (Tero Nauha), A PREACHER (Annette Arlander), A WIDOW (Pilvi Porkola) and A SOPRANO (Hanna Järvinen).

The setup: center stage a table covered with white table cloth, an urn on the table and four chairs around it, a small action camera on the table, two. microphones, some tableware covered by a cloth. Stage left a podium, some roses and toy birds on the floor, stage right a sound system with theremin and synthesizer, on the back wall of the stage a large projection screen.

Prologue

(THE WIDOW and THE SOPRANO distribute hand programs to audience upon arrival. THE CANTOR sprays 'holy scent' on the first rows.)

THE PREACHER:

Welcome to this wake of our beloved and respected one. We are very happy to see so many of you here, joining in our deep sorrow. We hope that with the help of artistic research we can share this moment of loss and say our final goodbyes with due ceremony. Unfortunately, we are in a slight disagreement concerning who the deceased actually is or was. You have all received the program; we will now start with a sermon and then continue with a wake, a communion, and end with a hymn to honour our dearly departed.

A Sermon

(The video *The Pine Revisited*, 16 min. 36 sec., is projected on the screen, accompanied by THE CANTOR on the theremin.)

THE PREACHER (standing at the podium):

Let us now congregate around the scriptures.

Eating others or making honey? Cannibalism increases the risk of prion diseases, like the mad cow disease. Thus, we might find it safer to eat others. But this is not as easy as it sounds, because others are not separate from us.

Physicist and queer theorist Karen Barad suggests that 'bodies, including but not limited to human bodies, come to matter through the world's iterative intra-activity, its performativity' and acquire 'boundaries, properties, and meanings ... through the intra-activity of mattering' (Barad 2012, 69). 'Intra-actions include the larger material arrangement', she writes, 'that effects an *agential cut* between "subject" and "object" (in contrast to the more familiar Cartesian cut which takes

this distinction for granted)...’ (Barad 2007, 139–140). Differentiating is not about radical exteriorities, she adds: ‘what is on the other side of the agential cut is never separate from us.’ (Barad 2012, 69).

This goes for artistic research as well, for cuts between artistic research and other forms of research, or other kinds of artistic practice, between the artist as subject and the artist as object, the one who eats and the one to be eaten and so on. Is this becoming too complicated? We could rather try to think in terms of sympoiesis, in the words of Donna Haraway:

Perhaps as sensual molecular curiosity and definitely as insatiable hunger, irresistible attraction toward enfolding each other is the vital motor of living and dying on earth. Critters interpenetrate each other, loop around and through one another, eat each other, get indigestion, and partially digest and partly assimilate one another, and thereby establish sympoietic arrangements that are otherwise known as cells, organisms, and ecological assemblages. (Haraway 2016, 58)

Cows and other ruminants regurgitate half-digested food in order to chew it a second time. This is what artistic researchers generally are asked to do, to chew their cud. The recommended mode of rumination is usually reflexivity, or critical self-reflection, to avoid narcissistic self-promotion. The Skylla to that Charybdis is drowning in a vortex of reflexivity. Indeed, following Haraway and Barad, we might choose diffraction rather than reflection as a safer tool.

Diffraction as a concept owes as much to the feminist theorizing about difference as to physics, (Barad 2014, 168) where in its classical form it is understood as the result of the superposition or interference of waves (Barad 2007, 78-79). In quantum physics diffraction experiments are ‘at the heart of the “wave versus particle” debates about the nature of light and matter’ (Barad 2007, 72-73) and have shown how ‘wave and particle are not inherent attributes of objects but’, interestingly, ‘the atoms perform wave or particle in their intra-action with the apparatus.’ (Barad 2014, 180). As a methodology diffraction was used by Donna Haraway as a counterpoint to reflection. For Karen Barad it is, among other things, ‘a tool for thinking about social/natural practices in a performative rather than representationalist mode’ (Barad 2007, 88). Thinking diffractively can thus imply a self-accountable, critical, and responsible engagement with the world, while reading diffractively can mean reading texts ‘through one another’ to produce unexpected outcomes, as suggested by Geerts and van der Tuin (2016). Rather than ‘a boundary-crossing, trans/disciplinary methodology’, which is ‘blurring the boundaries between different disciplines and theories to provoke new thoughts’ (Geerts and van der Tuin 2016), we could perhaps understand diffractive reading in the tradition of artistic cut-ups (Burroughs and Gysin 1978)

as various forms, combinations or collages of texts, images, video clips, memories and experiences.

If honeybees produce honey by a process of regurgitation, could we hope that chewing one's cud as an artist could produce something equally valuable? The video you see here explores reflexivity and repetition in artistic research by recording a visit to the site of *Year of the Dog*, on Harakka Island in Helsinki on 28 February 2018. *Year of the Dog* was performed and recorded approximately once a week from 7 January 2006 to 11 February 2007 and it is one of the works in the series *Animal Years* (2003-2014), based on repeated weekly visits to a site on that island each year. *Day and Night of the Dog* was performed in the same pine tree for a day and night with two-hour intervals from noon to noon on October 20-21 in 2006, that same year. These old video works are inserted, first the year, then the day and night, in the recently recorded real-time sequence.

While sitting in the pine, the branches of which had grown so vigorously during twelve years, that sitting proved rather uncomfortable, I tried to remember my previous experiences, without much success. What I did remember, where some thoughts I recently read, by Anna Tsing, in her ground-breaking study *The Mushroom at The End of the World - On the possibility of life in capitalist ruins* (2015), where pine trees are key figures together with matsutake mushrooms. She describes how 'pines, matsutake and humans all cultivate each other unintentionally. They make each other's world-making projects possible.' (Tsing 2015, 152) For her 'landscapes more generally are products of unintentional design', they are 'overlapping world-making activities of many agents, human and not human.' Although the 'design is clear in the landscape's ecosystem... none of the agents have planned this effect.' (Tsing 2015, 152) According Tsing 'humans join others in making landscapes of unintentional design.' (Tsing 2015, 152) She writes:

As sites for more-than-human dramas, landscapes are radical tools for decentering human hubris. Landscapes are not backdrops for historical action: they are themselves active. Watching landscapes in formation shows humans joining other living beings in shaping worlds. Matsutake and pine don't just grow in forests; they make forests. Matsutake forests are gatherings that build and transform landscapes. (Tsing 2015, 152)

The group of pine trees that has grown during these twelve years near the old pine on Harakka Island is perhaps not a forest, and there are no matsutake mushrooms anywhere near the area as far as I know. Tsing's idea of humans and others cultivating each other unintentionally, seems to make sense, however. She refers to human dependence of other life forms, 'we proudly independent humans

are unable to digest our food without helpful bacteria, first gained as we slide out of the birth canal.’ (Tsing 2015, 142) There are more bacteria than cells in the human body, and they are necessary for us. Tsing refers to biologist Scott Gilbert and his colleagues, who claim that, ‘almost all development may be codevelopment. By codevelopment we refer to the ability of the cells of one species to assist the normal construction of the body of another species.’ (Gilbert quoted in Tsing 2015, 142) ‘This insight changes the unit of evolution’, Tsing writes. ‘Some biologists have begun to speak of the “hologenome theory of evolution”, referring to the complex of organisms and their symbionts as an evolutionary unit: the “holobiont”’, she adds. Tsing describes how, in order to emphasize development, ‘Gilbert and his colleagues use the term “symbiopoiesis”, the codevelopment of the holobiont’, in contrast ‘with an earlier focus of life as internally self-organizing systems, self-formed through “autopoiesis”. ‘More and more’, they write, ‘symbiosis appears to be the “rule”, not the exception... Nature may be selecting “relationships” rather than individuals or genomes.’’ (Tsing 2015, 142) Tsing summarizes her view on codevelopment and contingency: ‘Interspecies relations draw evolution back into history because they depend on the contingencies of encounter.’ Moreover, ‘interspecies encounters are always events, “things that happen”. The units of history.’ Events ‘cannot be counted on in the way self-replicating units can; they are always framed by contingency and time.’ (Tsing 2015, 142)

And now, let us listen to some examples of the myriad voices of the world:
(the sound of wind and a voice in Finnish, with English subtitles, from the video is accompanied by THE CANTOR with live sound of theremin)

A Wake

(From left to right THE WIDOW, THE SOPRANO, THE PREACHER and THE CANTOR , gather around the table with the urn, standing.)

THE WIDOW (places the roses on the table, tears some of them and spreads the petals over the urn):

It’s time to say goodbye, my love.

You always knew everything.

You were always sure about everything.

You had huge tradition with heroes and noble men behind you.

You had strict orders to follow and great thoughts to think.

You knew what a competition means. You wanted always to win.

You always said how things are, I mean, what the facts really are.

You were one of those who wanted to have power and make it great again.

Now you don’t have a body anymore.

Goodbye, darling.

After you there will be something else.

There will be more shadows.

There will be more uncertainty, ambivalence, more freedom.

There will be more subjectivity but also more relational thinking; there will be more “others” and many ways of knowing.

There will be fewer orders, less hierarchy, less men who always knew it all.

There will be more fragments, more poetry perhaps.

There will be more space.

We are still here, in flesh.

After you there will be a future.

THE SOPRANO (hits the urn with a rose):

Dearly departed,

I admit that I owe a lot to you. My career, in academia, has been due to your insidious presence, your choice of always standing up for the white guy at the expense of everyone else. It pissed me off just enough.

I am not convinced that you are, in fact, dead, although I have been told of your death by the dead white men of Roland Barthes’s and Michel Foucault’s ilk, time and again assured that we live in a different world now, as Jacques Derrida did when conspicuously turning all of us who are not dead white men as at best exceptions to the rule.

Yet, it seems you are resurrected, time and again, not so much Christ-like as a paradoxical zombie called forth by the voice of the master narrative in art, the one that claims we cannot do without you; the one that insists you are a neutral party, not a function of power with which to keep discourse focused on your limited number.

So trust me that I will be here, waiting with my mambo and my houngan, who are the subaltern, the queer, the feminist voices not allowed as much as a proper name in your vision of art. I am holding a stake, ready to put you down, analyse you to death again. Because even nameless, we shall overcome you.

THE PREACHER (places a rose to lean against the urn):

Dear Friend, if I dare call you that, since we were never really close. I should perhaps rather say dear mentor, teacher, guide and guard.

I feel very sad in saying goodbye, because your presence, the idea of your presence, has been so important to me and to many, many people that I love and respect, both now living and long departed. Because of You they could defend their critical and sometimes even openly outrageous work or legitimate their extraordinary flights of fancy. You provided the support and theoretical

legitimation, both for their extremely socially conscious and also their totally antisocial artistic projects and plans. Although we never really met and like many others, I suspected that you had passed away long ago, only that was never officially admitted, I feel this moment when your departure is an acknowledged fact is nevertheless something of a shock. Even though I have to admit that I often accepted that you were a mere fantasy, an illusion, a smoke screen to hide harsh reality, to openly admit that you are no longer with us will mean a huge change in our understanding of what could be done, what should be done and how to do it. Without you artistic research will never be the same again. Our beloved mentor, teacher, guide and guard - Artistic Freedom - Rest in Peace.

THE CANTOR:

Dear someone, without a name.

You have contaminated us by the heretical knowledge, a different pedagogy, which resembles the slithering snakes, murmuring of night-mares and swarming of bees, these mischevious and nefarious discourses of yours.

St. Bernard has requested us to ask in *The Song of Songs*

Where, then, is the fox? We held him fast just now. How has he escaped from our hands? [...] we shall recognize him by his fruits. Assuredly the spoiling of the vines is a proof that the fox has been there. (Peters 1980, 99)

You were the cunning fox. We need to look at the fruits of your teachings, because we cannot tell if you were a heretic from the outlook or conduct yours. Since, to know a heretic, requires an authority to recognize the heretic. It requires an inquest in order to fortify the authority. It asks for an authority to recognize how the heretics, atheists, witches or scholastics only try to imitate the words of men like apes.

The emergence of such counterfeitters like you, is always a sign and asks for the re-organization of the accumulated capital or the production of knowledge. It is not that your heretical teachings did not exist before, since they were already defined in the 'medicine chest' of *Panarion* by Epiphanius in the 370s, when radical changes took place in the society.

You were a deviant and an exception, that the expropriation needed. The orthodoxy of knowledge and research has always been contested by the antagonising positions, and only heterodoxies prevail.

You said, that each sect may once become a hegemony, and each orthodoxy once was heretical. Each philosophical standardisation of argument, choice and decision between a concept and the reality, Being and beings. That you never existed is a fruit of your teaching, when you were dragged over hot coals by us.

(From left to right THE WIDOW, THE CANTOR, THE SOPRANO, and THE PREACHER sit down at the table. THE WIDOW distributes papers and pens for all the performers to write scores and fold them into airplanes. In the background, a video projection is shown, including the following sentences:

In feminist theory there has always been an aspect of utopian knowledge.
The imagination can be a tool or a method for research.
The imagination consists for example:
An aim to hear, feel and see things we haven't heard felt or seen before.
An act to adduce relations (between humans, non-humans and things) we haven't valued before.
Desire to create the new kind of future that is based on another kind of past
Moreover, utopian thinking is about re-writing history and it's about writing the future.
How about this in the context of artistic research?
What we haven't heard, felt and seen yet?
What kind of connections and relations we like to value?
Is there a need to re-write past (or presence) for another kind of future?
What is utopian aspect in artistic research?
What does it promise for us?
What will change?

THE WIDOW, THE CANTOR, THE SOPRANO, and THE PREACHER rise and throw their paper airplanes to the audience.)

A Communion

(From left to right THE WIDOW, THE CANTOR, THE SOPRANO, and THE PREACHER sit at the table. THE SOPRANO distributes *mämmi*, a Finnish easter delicacy, into small glass bowls. Each performer adds cream to the *mämmi* according to their preference. THE PREACHER turns on the action camera on the table to record the image of the bowl of THE WIDOW, who is not eating, to be projected live on the screen. THE SOPRANO and THE CANTOR have an improvised conversation on the following topics whilst eating *mämmi*:

- Necropolitics
- Its connections with anthropophagy
- The colony and cultural appropriation
- The holy texts and universals in art, e.g. 'the modern'
- Power, heretics, and the inquisition of art?

- Art as an Eurocentric and colonizing construct

THE SOPRANO:

First explain the eating part for the audience. Next: definition of necropolitics, although let's leave this for another time – in short, we're not there, yet, in art. The precarious has not yet reached the level where conditioning of life (biopolitics) has become the conditioning of death (necropolitics) through terrain of terror no longer in control of the sovereign/state.

But what connects this to antropophagy: Bataille and the thematics of the victim – are these interesting? Postcolonialism – both are, after all, postcolonialist notions arising from the specificity of the colonial condition. This leads to the question: is us using these kinds of concepts some kind of cultural appropriation? (Of course, Finland was a colony first of Sweden and then of Russia, but I for one do not identify as a (post)colonial subject.)

Cultural appropriation: Is the line of what is appropriation that which is holy or sacred? Can the state be something sacred (as it is in certain nationalist understandings of statehood)? What of art? What in art is sacred? The canon, perhaps. A canon is the collection of holy texts and holy people – for example, modernists.

What of uses of power: are there heretics in art or is there an inquisition of art? Art is a Eurocentric, colonialist and colonializing construct: art forms are defined from the specific tradition of Eurocentric ideas as to what constitutes art – cf. what is art and what is artefact; who is an artist; what is 'music' and 'theatre' and 'dance' and why these are separated? This links to how these are researched: any music outside of European tradition is studied with ethnomusicological tools (Dabashi 2013).

Today, we no longer live in the world of public, corporeal punishment but in the era of surveillance (Foucault 1975), we have internalised the power function into self-surveillance and self-censorship.

The colonialist relation within art is the reply that one gets when questioning the sacred in the canon for their appropriative behaviours is 'yes, but?' I.e. so what if Picasso used African art works as his source, that was his colonialist right. Should this not be questioned?

THE CANTOR:

What is Anthropophagy? 'I am interested only in what is not mine. Law of man. Law of the cannibal,' writes Oswald de Andrade (1999, 92), in the *Cannibalist Manifesto* in 1928. This is, still, a western and a modernist perspective to anthropophagy, and yet it was de Andrade who has from then on instigated the whole development of the *Tropicalismo* movement in Brazil. Lygia Clark stated in 1969 that: 'when the artist digests the object, he is digested by society which has already found him a title and a bureaucratic function: he will be the future

engineer of leisure, an activity that has no effect whatsoever on the equilibrium of social structures' (quoted in Rolnik 2007). In regard of this sentence, Clark does not claim that we should keep innovating only ephemeral and conceptual works of art, in order to escape the 'bureaucratic function', but rather, that we should not *only* 'digest' the past, but rather keep churning it, feigning it, chowing on it, cloning it and imitating it — but never let it become part of our system. But how could this be?

Tupi, or not Tupi, was the question de Andrade asked in his manifesto. This group, Tupinambá from the Brazilian coast had a system of war and cannibalism of a elaborate kind, where captives of war often lived long periods of time with the captors group, where they were treated almost as equals and they were given women as spouses, also. They became the brother-in-law, *tojavar*, which also meant an enemy or an opponent. Predatory logic is implicated as in affinity, and not in alliance. However, after a while the captive was subjected to a solemn ritual killing, in the village center, which was also an initiation for selected executioner. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro writes how after the initiation, the initiated

thereby received a new name, commemorative scarifications, the right to marry and have children, access to paradise, etc.) and was followed by the ingestion of his body by those in attendance—guests from neighboring villages as much as their hosts—with the sole exception of the officiant. Not only would he not eat the captive, but afterward he would also enter into a funerary confinement, a period of mourning. He entered, in other words, into a process of identification with this 'opponent' whose life he had just taken. (Viveiros de Castro 2014, 140-41).

My question is to think about the relationship 'predator' logic of the 'bestial', here presented by de Andrade and Clark, which is twisted in the fabric of Tropicalismo and further, where anthropophagy is a central term—which is not cannibalism. But can we comprehend this, at all? Is it at all possible that de Andrade and Clark would have avoided the same pitfalls as we do in our epistemological violence toward the Tupinambá, Arawate, or any other non-western axiom of thinking?

At least we could start, from the comprehension, that post-tropicalismo culture still have a relation with predator logic. But that it is not the *substance* or *matter* that is being eaten, but also not a metaphysical virtue. 'What was eaten was the enemy's relation to those who consumed him [...] his condition as enemy. In other words, what was assimilated from the victim was the signs of his alterity, the aim being to reach his alterity as point of view on the Self.' (Viveiros de Castro 2014, 142) So, what is being consumed is a condition and a point of view, a

different perspective is being consumed, and it becomes part of a new host, or does the host turn into a hybrid, an alien form, and an enemy? But the difference from the necropolitical war, is that in this ritual killing, that there is 'a zone of indiscernibility between killers and victims, eater and eaten.' (Viveiros de Castro 2014, 148). The predator logic is not a universal or orthodox logic, but accommodate strangers, and strange behaviours.

Who has been eaten now?

(THE WIDOW, THE CANTOR, THE SOPRANO, and THE PREACHER
clear the table.)

A Hymn

(THE SOPRANO sings standing in front of the podium, accompanied by the CANTOR with synthesiser. THE WIDOW and THE PREACHER repeat and sing along with the audience the chorus verses. The video *The Pine on the Shore Revisited*, 17 min., is projected on the screen.)

THE SOPRANO (sings the first verse of the folk song "Taivas on sinen ja valkoinen" without accompaniment in Finnish, and then says):

All rise for the Hymn

(sings)

1. The sky is a-blue and the sky is a-white and the sky is filled with
starlight.
(chorus repeats)
So my young heart' s filled with wonder filled with looming sorrow.
(chorus repeats)
2. Don't ask me how to do things with performance nor with artistic
research.
(chorus repeats)
Onl y the woods and the sky' s bright brilliance will fill my heart with
ideas.
(chorus repeats)
3. Artistic research may eat itself and the world will barely notice.
(chorus repeats)
Performers all, we'll stand united and guarantee art matters.
(chorus repeats)

4. (TOY BIRDS, held by THE WIDOW, sing the last verse without lyrics into the microphone held by THE SOPRANO)

Documentation of Do

Documentation

Some images and audiovisual material from the performance are available on the Research Catalogue

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/281037/281038/3516/1221>

Bibliography

- Barad, K. (2007) *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham NC: Duke University Press.
- Barad, K. (2012) 'Intra-actions' (interview of Karen Barad by Adam Kleinmann), *Mousse*, 34, 76–81.
- Barad, K. (2014) 'Diffracting Diffraction: Cutting Together-Apart', *Parallax*, 20:3, 168-187.
- Barthes, R. (1977) 'The Death of the Author.' In *Image-Music-Text*. Essays selected and translated by Stephen Heath. London: Fontana Press, 142-148.
- Burroughs, W. and Gysin, B. (1978) *The Third Mind*. New York: The Viking Press.
- Dabashi, H. (2015) *Can Non-Europeans Think?* London: Zed Books.
- Derrida, J. (2006) *Geneses, Genealogies, Genres, and Genius: The Secrets of the Archive*. Translated by Beverley Bie Brahic. New York: Columbia University Press.
- de Andrade, O. (1999) "Cannibalist manifesto." *Third Text*, Vol. 13, No. 46. London: Routledge, 92-95.
- Foucault, M. (2001) 'Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?' *Dits et écrits I, 1954–1975*. France: Quarto Gallimard, 817-849.
- Foucault, M. (1975) *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Geerts E. and van der Tuin, I. (2016), 'Diffraction and Reading Diffractively' *New Materialism. How matter comes to matter*
<http://newmaterialism.eu/almanac/d/diffraction> (Accessed 29.4.2018)
- Haraway, D. (2016) *Staying with the trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Hemmings, C. (2018) *Considering Emma Goldman. Feminist Political Ambivalence and Imaginative Archive*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Mbembe, A. (2003) 'Necropolitics'. Translated by Lilly Mentjes. *Public Culture*, Volume 15, Number 1, Winter 2003, Durham: Duke University Press, 11-40.
- Ono, Y. (1970) *The Grapefruit*. New York: Simon & Shuster.
- Peters, E. (1980) *Heresy and authority in medieval Europe*. Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press.

- Rolnik, S. (2007) 'The Body's Contagious Memory - Lygia Clark's Return to the Museum.' Edited by Rodrigo Nunes.
<http://eipcp.net/transversal/0507/rolnik/en/print>. (Accessed March 20, 2017.)
- Tsing, A. (2015) *The Mushroom at The End of the World - On the possibility of life in capitalist ruins*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Viveiros de Castro, E. (2014) *Cannibal Metaphysics*. Translated by Peter Skafish. Minneapolis: Univocal.

BECOMING IMPERFECT: A RECIPE FOR MAKING A COLLECTIVE FILM IN TWENTY MINUTES

Allister Gall

Abstract

This paper gives a brief overview of the Imperfect Cinema project (2010-present), a participatory venue I run for film, video and moving image art based in Plymouth, UK. This project supports my ongoing research, exploring the emancipatory potential of the idea of imperfection as an artistic praxis. I consider this work to be interdisciplinary because it features a mixture of film, moving image art and music - alongside the creation of situations in social environments that open up egalitarian spaces for participatory activity. I will outline a method for communicating and articulating imperfection as praxis, in an immediate context, by using digital filmmaking and collaborative approaches. I describe this project as a recipe for making a collective film in twenty minutes, which was the workshop I facilitated during the Artistic Research Will Eat Itself Conference and panel: *Artistic Research Inside/Outside the Academy: Communal, Resistant, Spontaneous & Becoming*.

Introduction

The Imperfect Cinema project (2010-present) develops participatory, accessible and experimental environments for film, sound and the moving image. We run DIY micro-cinema events with open-access screenings, digital and analogue filmmaking workshops, writing and zine making, live screen and music events, documentary and interactive projects, symposiums and get-togethers for makers and researchers. Since its beginning, the project has operated as a kind of institute for research, supporting a diverse approach to artistic practice that allows for the interrogation of DIY approaches to participatory filmmaking in social contexts. All-together, I frame this orchestration of work as imperfect praxis, addressing collective and participatory modes of production and collaborative knowledge making. This, in turn, allows for the examination of how we participate and understand emerging artistic culture by developing shared dialogues, renewing ideas and sitting in between DIY subcultural underground activities and academic discourse. In doing so, it embraces what Rancière terms indisciplinary – escaping the separations between disciplines.

Since beginning this (imperfect) project, at least three additional collaborative and autonomous projects have emerged: The Imperfect Orchestra (initially the Imperfect Cinema Orchestra, 2013), Imperfect VR (Straeubig, 2016) and Imperfect Interactive (Gall-Zarins, 2018). These exciting expansions of Imperfect Cinema indicate that interrogating the idea of imperfection can point towards a generative methodology from which to develop cultural activity and participatory

activity and answers a critical question for artistic research: how to open up spaces for sharing knowledge and research inside and outside the academy. And, in doing so, how this can act as a methodology to impact local environments by spawning new artistic practitioners and encouraging cultural projects.

Imperfect Praxis

An imperfect praxis is a way of working that places value on interaction, participation and play within social contexts. These methods are central for an ethos emerging through collaboration and shared dialogue, alongside contextual and theoretical frameworks - drawing from punk DIY culture, third cinema, Espinosa's initial call for an imperfect cinema (1969), relational aesthetics and collective film and other forms of collaborative cultural production. These concepts, theories and approaches have been central to my understanding of how imperfection can support artistic research.

My work has always been influenced by the Rancièrian idea of how we disrupt the disciplines and boundaries that separate specialists. In this sense, I am interested in using my opportunities to speak at academic conferences and symposiums, in order to further explore and create audio-visual collaborative works that are immediate, uncertain and imperfect. This underscores an attempt to engage with the ideas of 'indisciplinary practice' (Rancièr), an approach I have been developing whereby digital mobile technologies are used in order to capture imagery, disrupt aesthetics and bring people together.

I am becoming less interested in spending extended periods of time in front of a computer editing audio-visual work on my own. Instead, I am concerned with how looking, recording and distorting images can operate within immediate social contexts. This (imperfect) praxis-oriented approach considers the possibilities of digital technology, not solely through its aesthetic capabilities, but by fostering playful and uncertain approaches that are underpinned by a collaborative spirit for disruption. This method highlights the idea of amateurism, in the sense that rather than attempting to acquire professional digital images, it plays with the technologies and values a collective spirit of disruption; one that aspires to express what Stiegler calls a 're-enchantment with the world' (2014). This can be seen as a continuation of making and thinking about the importance of artistic practices and human relationships, considering how we use contemporary technologies to perceive and observe environments.

An Imperfect Approach to a Conference Talk

The themes of the conference include a warning against methodological introspection and inward-looking reflexivity. Therefore, rather than only talking about my research, the emancipatory qualities of imperfection and its relation to praxis, I used the allocated twenty minutes to facilitate the making of a collective film. I decided to continue an ongoing series of participatory workshops I have been delivering since 2010, applying DIY digital filmmaking techniques, using quality street wrappers, cling film, Vaseline and other objects, to obscure the lens and transform and distort the digital aesthetics. Alongside looking, capturing and transforming environments with these simple methods, the project also considers

what one notices, issues around authorship and how we document the world with images and sounds.

To adopt an imperfect approach, the scenario should be intentionally difficult to control. This method centres the imperfect qualities of an imperfect praxis. It's not about making films as efficiently as possible. Instead, the aim is to look and capture what Jonas Mekas calls '...Brief Glimpses of Beauty' (2000). Much like Mekas, I am interested in the tensions between improvised, diaristic audio-visual work and the editorial process. However, with these imperfect workshops, I am attempting to develop a collaborative approach to the diaristic film form, rather than a work of singular authorship. In a world that attempts to create a perfect digital environment, an imperfect approach celebrates the flaws and failures that emerge through collaboration, immediacy and obstruction. These imperfections and uncertainties emerge through ephemeral minor processes that make for a dynamic audio-visual composition. This minor approach to practice (Deleuze-Guattari, 1986) embraces chance and negates the need for prior skill or theory in order to participate. In doing so, this way of working attempts to explore alternatives to mainstream film culture and how we can use mobile technologies in interesting ways, reflecting on environments, what we see and how collaborative approaches can lead towards uncertain results.

As digital technology becomes increasingly ubiquitous, I suggest that the emancipatory idea of imperfection as praxis can be used to explore collective approaches in immediate settings, using and disrupting aesthetics, dominant platforms (such as Google, Facebook and Apple) and engaging with the idea of uncertainty. The creation of situations that brings people together – to perceive environments and initiate dialogues - can help us develop new dynamics in how we interact with technologies and each other. I want to push the limits of my approach to praxis as my imperfect project continues to develop - to challenge the norms associated with contemporary filmmaking and other forms of cultural production - in order to create works that are participatory, immediate and unconventional. In this sense, the value can be seen as being within collaborative processes that attempt to resist and disrupt dominant mass media, aesthetics and technologies, whilst at the same time, harnessing their accessible potentials.

A Recipe for Making a Collective Film in Twenty Minutes

What You Will Need:

People
A Place
Accessible video technologies
Translucent sweet wrappers

Additional Resources:

Editing software (on a mobile phone or computer)
Internet

Method

1. Think of something you noticed on your way to the workshop. Something that caught your eye and is in close proximity. It should be within 100 meters (1 min).
2. Write it down on a post-it note. This will be a shot (1 min).
3. Hand your shot to somebody else (1 min).
4. Eat a sweet and use the translucent sweet wrapper as a DIY lens filter (1 min).
5. Take out your phone and switch to video mode (1 min).
6. Leave the room and attempt to shoot the shot as described in the post-it note given to you. You should shoot for approx. 10 seconds. As you shoot this shot, verbally describe why you thought of your original image that caught your eye. What was visually interesting? What caught your eye? (5 mins).
7. Come back to the room and put your phones in a line on the table. The facilitator will film your shots one at a time as they play on the device (5mins).
8. Edit the shots together and upload the film online (5 mins).
9. Discuss (post-workshop).

Stills from Becoming Imperfect: A Collective Film in Twenty Minutes



Figure 1. A film still from Becoming Imperfect: A Collective Film in Twenty Minutes.



Figure 2. A film still from *Becoming Imperfect: A Collective Film in Twenty Minutes*.



Figure 3. A film still from *Becoming Imperfect: A Collective Film in Twenty Minutes*.

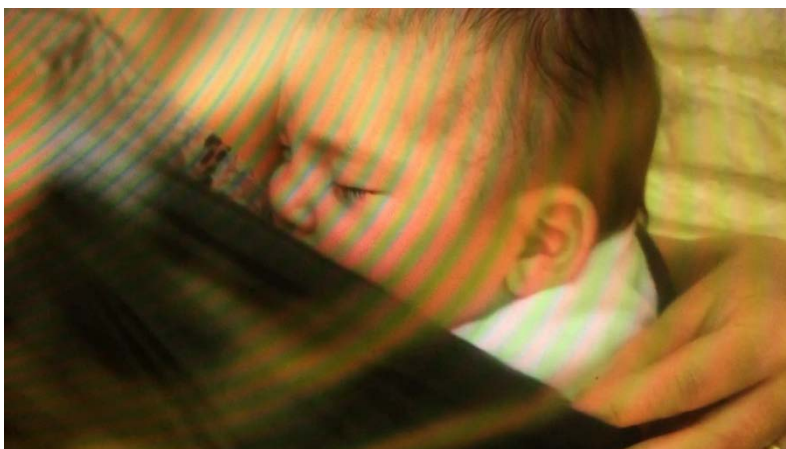


Figure 4. A film still from *Becoming Imperfect: A Collective Film in Twenty Minutes*.

Bibliography

- As I was Moving Ahead Occasionally I Saw Brief Glimpse of Beauty*, 2000 [film].
Directed by Jonas Mekas. USA.
- Baronian, M-A and Mireille, R. (2008). Jacques Rancière and Indisciplinarity. *Art & Research: A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods* 2 (1): 1-10.
- Bourriaud, N., Pleasance, S., Woods, F., & Copeland, M. (2002). *Relational Aesthetics*. Documents sur l'art. Dijon: Les presses du réel.
- Deleuze, D and Guattari, F. (1986). *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*. Trans. Dana Polan and Réda Bensmaïa. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Espinosa, J. G. (1979). For an Imperfect Cinema. *Jump Cut*, 24-26.
- Stiegler, B. (2014). *The re-enchantment of the world!: the value of spirit against industrial populism*. London: Continuum.

VENTRILOQUISTS III¹

Philippine Hoegen

Part I: Versioning

(Glasses on, MP3 in pocket. Version: *The moderator.*)

Thank you for this introduction Anya, thanks also to the Plymouth University, to SAR, and thank you Philippine. As an artist engaging with issues of objectness and personhood, with a practice consisting of performance, collaborative and performative events and interventions, Philippine is conducting an artistic research with the rather cumbersome title *The Self as a Relational Infrastructure in Process*². In this practice-based enquiry she is looking at the production of different versions of ourselves, the technologies and processes used to produce these versions, and how to understand the self within the existence of these multiple versions.

There are objects, concepts and apparatuses that we use to transform or replicate ourselves, propelling different forms of ourselves into the world, or into our own minds eye. She refers to those as *technologies of versioning*. Drugs or pacemakers, glasses or computers, clothes and houses and electricity, or drones or dildos, weapons or work, not to mention *information*. The technologies of versioning Philippine is most interested in are those that we interact with or produce physically, or that are part of our physicality.

What preceded this research was a fascination with the mirror image and the promise that lies therein: a potential encounter with yourself, in the same way you can meet another, the ability to see yourself moving in the world as you can see someone else moving in it. The mirror image is a manifestation of a human condition, what Helmut Plessner called 'eccentric positionality'. His reasoning is quite simple: A plant *is* its body, an animal, is also *in* its body, there is a notional centre (a central nervous system). The human being differs again from the animal because, besides this central position she also maintains a relationship to this

¹ Text and performance by Philippine Hoegen, dramaturgy by Lilia Mestre.

² A practice-based research commissioned by the Centre of Applied Research for Art, Design and Technology (Caradt) at Avans University (NL), supervised by Professor Sebastian Olma.

centrality, she experiences her experience. The human, in a sense, thus positions herself beyond herself.

Whether plants and animals would agree with this analogy is questionable, but that humans exist largely outside their bodies seems pertinent, especially now in our contemporary era with our virtual lives, the ubiquity and influence of images, reproductions and recreations of ourselves through different contexts of work, social media etc. We spend our lives outside ourselves, looking at ourselves and we feel displaced. Our mirror image is perhaps the perfect metaphor or even the personification of the orphaned figure looking longingly from a distance at ourselves. This image is the repository of the many conflicting ideas we have about ourselves, or rather about 'self'.

To penetrate this notion of the self-outside-the-self, Philippine orchestrated all kinds of encounters between herself and her mirror image (or video image, audio recording etc.) to facilitate forms of conversation between them. This has brought into existence a host of versions of herself, coming into motion and demanding their own attention, creating in fact a presence and a responsibility for that presence. In the first experiments, the emphasis was always on trying to approach and confront *herself as another*. At some point, she decided to turn this around, into *the other as herself*: she went looking for someone whom she could consider a different version of herself. She chose a man with a beard and followed him for a while. The events that occurred whilst they were together were so particular that she felt confirmed in her thought-experiment, and she decided to pursue it. She gave this new version of herself a name, David, and started to embody him.

Part II: A Conversation

(Glasses Off, beard On. Version: David.)

Within this practice of David, giving space to David in the apparatus of our own self, with all the questions about what that self is, we realised that the self is perhaps not one single thing, but a combination of sensations and beliefs, which may be our own and may have been taught to us, and that a self is a very much social construct, something that appears through the interaction with other people and things.

Acknowledging the fact that objects and ‘concepts are able to shape us as much as we shape them’,³ consciously entering into a negotiation of transformation with them, means moving beyond oppositions, presumed hierarchies and relation systems that we tend to consider absolute, rather than as beliefs.



Image 1: Still from the documentation video of Ventriloquists III, April 12th, Plymouth University.

Whether it's beads or broomsticks or beards, sugar, socks, sex, latex, X-rays, surveys, surnames, signals, cell phones and other small and shiny things, they are all conditions for our existence, with which we maintain intentional partnerships and relationships, they are objects or things that we are not born with, but that do make us ‘us’.

(Take MP3 player from pocket whilst still talking, insert earphones and press play. Speak aloud the recorded conversation that is audible only through the earphones.)

³ From the text *Xenophily and Computational Denaturalization*, by Patricia Reed, published on e-flux architecture, September 18th 2017, <http://www.e-flux.com/architecture/artificial-labor/140674/xenophily-and-computational-denaturalization/>

-Do you want to start Aykan⁴?

-Yeah... Looking at the cards and seeing so many representations of bodies I would propose that we pick the card with authorship, in relation maybe to our bodies?

-Oh! Ha-ha! Actually, I was just thinking I wanted to put alien but then you just said authorship.

-Okay then we can start actually.

-Yes... I am reminded of the bearded woman. She was basically an object or a curiosity. She was performing, you know, standing in these really unique formats that that appeared in Paris by the turn of the century, they were traveling as well, showing people actually. So, she served a lifetime basically doing that, and when she died her head was preserved and mummified

-Really? Wow...

... and it was put in a museum in glass jar...

-Oh, wow I didn't know that ...

-Umm... I think you know what is really specific about the queer theory, is that it made something apparent that was already there and no one was really thinking about, which was the performance!

-Ah, yes..

-I'm thinking, when we were talking earlier about this idea of the by-product... I think we're also bound to talk about 'beziehungen', which is relationships. Because you create your relationships and there are two authors in that and, for example the relationship between you and me, there are two decisive mechanisms to decide on the terms of this relationship. So, I think when we're doing this lifetime performance, more or less also on material terms actually, with... and, you know, through objects also, we're creating relationships.

-So, you're sort of saying that a by-product of the life performance are these relationships, an infrastructure of relations?

-Well I think it also relates to power in a way, and I was thinking about the term citizen, when we say citizen like an institutional identity, I understand myself in accordance to an institution, which is maybe the state itself...

-But the word 'citizenbody' maybe would be interesting, either as one word or as: 'citizen-slash-body'. There is a false promise, that as a citizen you can have a life. This is actually a huge dilemma... maybe an oxymoron even.

⁴ Fragments of a conversation that took place in Berlin on the 3rd of March 2017, with artists/curators Aykan Safoğlu and Emre Brusse. On the table was a set of domino-cards with words and images, from the work *A Tool for a Conversation*, http://www.philippinehoegen.com/projecten/Tool_for_a_conversation:_3/

Part III: Re-voicing

(Off stage: remove beard and MP3. Ask for a volunteer, stand side by side, volunteer faces the audience. The volunteer speaks out the text which is being whispered in their ear.)

Arabian goats eye; Magic Wand; Lelo Iris; Dr Kat's Flutter Ring; Tango We; Fun tongue; Picobong Transformer; Tingeltip; Vesper crave; Morning Wood; Heart Throbber; Carlos; Fun Factory Amorino; Komet Key; Jack Rabbit; Tantis Rumble...

So I bought a new dildo. It's a bit different from the one I already have, in the first place it's softer and more bendy. In the second place, it comes with a little strap-on or string type of thing, with Golden cords over the hips and a leather triangle with a shiny ring in which the dildo is inserted. The colour is a sort of very dark purple, it's vaguely translucent, and the shape is curvy, abstract, with three bulges along the shaft.

The other one is a two-way one, which can be gripped and held inside the wearer. It's extremely well designed: Black and sleek and very effective.

Funnily enough, even though the new one is definitely not as well made, and needs more accessorizing and fiddling with to be worn, it is not so different in its effect.

I take it from its little bag, attach the golden cords around my hips and secure the little leather triangle at my crotch. I looked down at the object rearing up from my body, and am instantly transformed.

I feel myself extended, it is me and I am it.



Image 2: Still from the documentation video of Ventriloquists III, April 12th, Plymouth University. With huge thanks to volunteer Carmen Wong.

Part IV: Where am I?

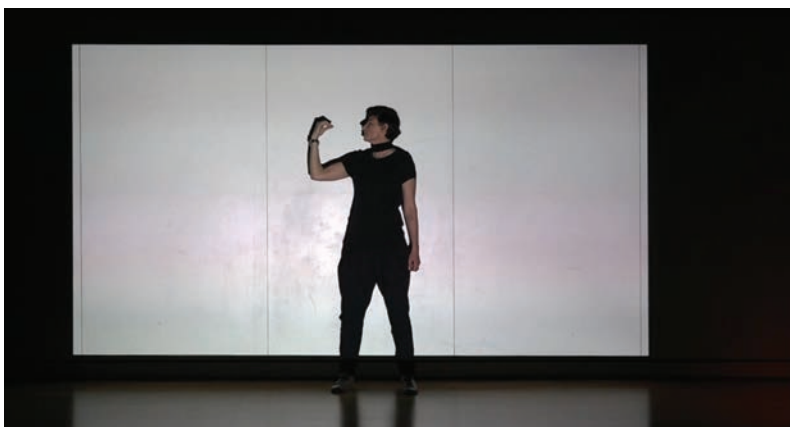


Image 3: Still from the documentation video of *Ventriloquists III*, April 12th, Plymouth University.

(The hand speaks.) As I was browsing the internet for texts that relate self and body to the notion of ventriloquism I came upon something noteworthy. A text called: *Reading Neuroscience, Ventriloquism as a Metaphor for Multiple Readings of the Self*.⁵ Guess where this thesis was submitted? Here at the Plymouth University! And weirdly the guy who wrote it is called David.

This David is preoccupied with self and selves, and the relation to body and voice. He wonders about the location of consciousness in the head. Our persistent imagining of ourselves as something sitting inside our heads looking through the

⁵ Reading Neuroscience, Ventriloquism as a Metaphor for Multiple Readings of the Self, by David Cenydd Lloyd Evans, a thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth in partial fulfilment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Dartington College of Arts, October 2006, read online at: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/29817772.pdf>

windows of our eyes. Two things happen in one instance when we do this: one is locating that self in a particular segment of the body and thus not in other parts of the body. Two is: it implies a separation of body and self. The self resides in the body, rather like a driver in a car.

(The belly speaks.) 'The locus of the liberal humanist subject lies in the mind, not the body. [...] The body is understood as an object for control and mastery instead of an intrinsic part of the self.' So says N. Katherine Hayles in *How We Became Post Human*⁶. Hayles is an advocate of embodiment, of understanding the self as embodied, as a body. But at the same time, she also cannot avoid speaking of the body objectively, as in: objectifying it, separating it. This seems to be unavoidable, somehow we cannot consistently conceptualize ourselves as our bodies. The stickiness of this inconsistency is epitomized in law:

(The breast speaks.) 'The law is silent on the question of the legal status of a living human body. A person, of course, enjoys a legal identity. A person's



Image 4: Still from the documentation video of *Ventriloquists III*, April 12th, Plymouth University.

⁶ *How We Became Posthuman, Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics*, by N. Katherine Hayles. Published by the University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1999, page 5.

blood, organs, tissue, sperm, and ovum can enjoy legal identities. A deceased body enjoys a legal identity. But a living body has been omitted from this taxonomy', says Meredith Render in *The Law of the Body*.⁷ The reason for this, says Render, is that there are almost superstitious objections to defining the body as a possession. The body is too sacred to be classified as something that can be possessed, or worse, commodified.

Part V: Under Voice:

(Version: neutral and friendly.)

Another thing this other David talks about in his thesis is Subvoicing and inner speech.

The voice is without a doubt a technology of the self. With our voice, we can 'speak for ourselves', we can *constitute* a self by saying I, and you. And we can demand attention for ourselves, 'express ourselves'. But the voice is also a clearly a technology of versioning: it is ready at hand, experienced inside us yet able to travel, transform and penetrate way beyond where the body can go.

To come back to the subvocalisation the other David was talking about: He describes tests that were done on people who were hearing voices inside their heads, voices that were making them do things. Using very sensitive equipment it was possible to ascertain that as they were hearing these voices, there was activity in many of the small muscles used in speech, so their own physical vocalizing or speech system was partially at work.

The act of ventriloquizing is commonly called the ability to 'throw' one's voice. Throwing the voice can mean to give voice to an object, to another person, another version of that person or of the self. But it can also be understood as forcing one's voice upon another, or throwing it away as in rejecting it, giving it away, or abandoning it.

I have been looking at examples of voice loss, what is called elective mutism or selective mutism. Some people just suddenly stop talking, and it's often not very clear in how far this is voluntary or more like a compulsion. Days after I had been

⁷ The Law of the Body, 62 Emory Law Journal 549 (2013), U of Alabama Public Law Research Paper No. 2019152, 58 Pages Posted: 11 Mar 2012, Last revised: 2 Apr 2013, Meredith Render, University of Alabama - School of Law, Date Written: March 9, 2012

reading about for example the case of the silent twins⁸ I suddenly remembered having once lost my own voice.

(Read in silence, but looking at the audience as one does when reading aloud.)

I was eleven years old, just moved to a new country, and I was cycling to the local swimming pool, an outdoor one in the woods. On one of the quiet tracks a kid on a moped caught up with me and pulled me off my bike. He dragged me into the bushes and tried to rape me. I became paralysed, like a rabbit in headlights, and it took a while for me to remember to scream, but then when I opened my mouth to do so no sound came out at all:

“Heeeeeeelp! Heeeeeeeelp!” I mouthed silently.

All I could finally manage was a whispered, plaintive:

“...please, please, please, please, please, please, please, please, please, please.....”

Somehow this worked, or more likely it was the fact that the gangly kid couldn’t figure out a way past my tight, one-piece bathing suit. Quite suddenly he got up and sped off on his moped, leaving me in a panicky voiceless mess. Somewhere along the way home my whispered sobbing:

“Heeehhhaaaauuuuuuuuh” started to gain audibility,

“Aaarhhahahahaargggg!”

And by the time I reached the house I could talk again.

Part VI: Who’s speaking please?

(Version: neutral and friendly.)

Let’s go back to the mirror image figure that finds herself beyond her body, looking at herself and feeling displaced. By vacating her body, she has created a void, a vessel left available for objectification and appropriation. In the gap between the body and the displaced self sits a longing: a longing to belong, to be in common, to subject. And here appears a new potential technology of versioning that can carry that longing, which may be God, or sovereign, or law.

⁸ June and Jennifer Gibbons (born 11 April 1963; Jennifer died March 1993) were identical twins who grew up in Wales. They became known as ‘The Silent Twins’ since they only communicated with each other. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/June_and_Jennifer_Gibbons, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=98WtP1qC61s>.

(Slide showing the following text:)

From Jurisprudence of Jurisdiction, Shaun Mcveigh, page 26:

The saying of law, jurisdiction, is what brings together the universal and the particular and articulates their relation...

All legislators repeat the gesture of Moses in Sinai. Moses speaks and gives the law as a mouthpiece or a ventriloquist's dummy; in reality it is God who speaks and dictates his words to Moses. ...

The function of jurisdiction is to bring the sovereign to life and give him voice and then, by confusing the person who speaks and the subject who states, to conceal sovereignty by confounding its creative performative aspect with the declaration of the law...⁹

(Using a voice deformer, this text is read aloud with a different effect each time, the readings are recorded and looped, stacked on top of each other until the sound becomes a loud, unintelligible mass of voices drowning each other with their own noise.)

⁹ Jurisprudence of Jurisdiction, Shaun Mcveigh, published by Routledge, March 12th 2007, page 26

TASTE SPIT SWALLOW

Christina Jauernik, Esther Balfe, Christian Freude, Ludwig Löckinger

Abstract

TASTE SPIT SWALLOW is a proposal for a screening. In response to the theme of the conference I develop a work concentrating on the mouth as one of the experimental figures investigated during the artistic research project INTRA SPACE¹. Considering and referring to Brandon LaBelle's 'Lexicon of the Mouth' I would like to show a video piece negotiating the multidimensional space of the mouth as a place of communication, a bi-directional space of transit, of censorship, experimentation, pleasure and production, 'a site of expressivity ... that turn(s) our bodies toward other species, other material forms, or immaterial apparitions, as well as each other' (LaBelle 2014: 12-13). A site studied through movement by two performers in exchange with the collective performative activity set in an experimental technical framework. INTRA SPACE is set up to explore diaphanous (Alloa 2012: 97) relations between virtual engineered figures, humans, technical equipment and machines aiming to explore the materiality, construction, form and appearance of our bodies in a near future. It offers a technical and conceptual infrastructure, a transformative disposition for equal encounters between digital, machinic and human sensoria. All seem to share a learning experience, an embodied, entangled exercise in shifting states of knowledge. Setting-in-motion of human and nonhuman identities, oscillating between their own and each others' constructions, constraints and memories. With the support of the digital camera eye, it is possible to effortlessly pass through the depths of the body and traverse its interiors. The mouth is introduced as one of many possible (virtually) shared sites to explore performative collaboration, channeling a fundamentally spatial choreography between and across the technical, virtual and physical spheres.

Video: 30 minutes

Christina Jauernik – performer, concept

Esther Balfe – performer

Christian Freude - computer scientist

Ludwig Löckinger – cinematographer

¹ INTRA SPACE: the reformulation of architectural space as a dialogical aesthetic (FWF – PEEK AR299-G21) project leader: Wolfgang Tschapeller.



(1) Mouth. Christina with Old Man, camera placed on her right inner wrist.
Rehearsal, April 2017. Copyright INTRA SPACE, 2017.

Taste

We are witnessing a meeting of an engineered being and a guest. We don't know where they come from, what language they speak, the grounds they might share, their history. It does not matter. They are practising. They come very close, closer than we can get to any person around us. They enter into the cavity of a mouth as if there would be no threshold, no logic of inner or outer. It is a slow and intimate tasting procedure, a learning and exploring of doubtful surfaces, fragile relationships and unstable placements. They are operating in the space of the mouth, the space that is so profoundly belonging to oneself. This very personal vessel where fluid is moved back and forth across day and night turns into their site of communication. Yet, no shared voice is formed in this engineered space of the mouth nor is there fluid moving. The non-verbal encounter, the shared physical experience is resonating and amplified through the movement of the communicating bodies. They move along the walls, gaze down towards the tongue and further along the throat, they turn and face the inside curves of the mouth facing the irregular line of the closed lips, like cushions gently resting and folding on each other. The mouth seen as 'performative chamber' (LaBelle, 2012: 2) and discursive field for encountering forms of communication, for rehearsing moments of finding conversations with the Other.

These meetings take place on a regular basis. The engineered being has been given a name, Old Man. Christina, the guest, has established contact points with Old Man through a structure virtually placed on to her body. The moving figures as perceptive entities of different matter, of flesh and code, weight and projected light, emotion and flicker together bond to a diaphanous infrastructure, which becomes their sentient carrier for the experience unfolding in front of our eyes. Similar to other hybrid constellations of vague nature involving the human and a figurative appearance, such as self-portraits, shadows, reflections or mirror images, or the literary figure of the *Doppelgänger*, the relationship is not built to ever reach an affirmative character. The queer quality of these hybrid arrangements, of moving through versions of self, of perceiving the other through your own behaviour, posture, resemblance and physical language, unsettles the division of the subject and the object or any binary opposition. The being in this differentiated situation appears as hybrid as well as a learning configuration.



(2) Inner head space. Christina with Old Man, view of the interior imprint of the ear, with the camera situated on her right palm. Rehearsal, April 2017. Copyright INTRA SPACE, 2017.

Spit

The point of view is not human. The pair of eyes are dislocated from its frontal place below the forehead to other parts of the body, such as the hand. A dramatic spatial shift on the perspective of the own body in relation to space, other objects and bodies in it. Consequently the familiar possibilities and visibilities of the own

body and its conditions changed. Areas of the body usually out of sight, such as the space underneath the chin, behind the ear, between the shoulder blades – enter all of a sudden your vision. Through this altered visibility, directing towards the absent and unknown, ‘the assumed position as “coherent subject” gets “disrupted” and “shattered” (Cram, 2008: 135). Zones of your body, only familiar through senses other than the visual, come into view, adapting and re-inventing the established cartography of one’s own body landscape. Distances, volumes and scale change with this new perspectives. In this gap of consciousness and comprehension, re-visiting one’s body structure, lies the potential to open new horizons of movement, of focus and orientation, projection and placement of self and others in space. At the same time, the mouth represents a form of reception which obstructs the dominance of the visual.



(3) Camera. The digital point of view is placed on the inside of Christina’s palm, she zooms into Old Man’s eyeball. Rehearsal, April 2017. Copyright INTRA SPACE, 2017.

Swallow

‘Each “individual” is made up of all possible histories of virtual intra-actions with all Others. Indeterminacy is an un/doing of identity that unsettles the very foundations of non/being.’ (Barad, 2012: 15). Through the space of the mouth, we explore our being of the world, being tempered in the world. In this paradoxical place of interior externalization, the mouth opens the subject. We dive into the alimentary canal, plunging into where voice and breath are carried alongside each other, pass the places where evaluation, acceptance or rejection is practiced, zones of pleasure and reflection. We taste, we spit, we swallow as

boundary-making practices. Embodied measuring – rehearsing a differentiated perspective emerging from the traverse of interior spaces. While we seem to become one, coming closer than imagined without a single touch, we merge into the qualities of the Other. Tiny flickering motions pass through Old Man's movements, sudden changes in orientation fling body parts into directions hardly traceable. Familiar categories and behaviors of weight, pulse, swallow are dispersed and begin to coincide with other machinic streams, rhythms, and ruptures.

The slow zooming in and out, meandering across the borders of interior and exterior mouth surfaces is accompanied by the voices of artists Esther Balfe, Christina Jauernik and Diane Shooman. The movement data of Christina and Esther has been captured and translated to acoustic frequencies. These machinic sounds were then embodied through the vocal recorder of the three bodies and transposed into the sound piece.

The video work 'Taste Spit Swallow' shown at ARTISTIC RESEARCH WILL EAT ITSELF slowly unfolds the concentrated work on the space of the mouth. It is an extract of the artistic practice established during INTRA SPACE (a project funded by the Austrian Science Fund – AR299-G21, project leader Wolfgang Tschapeller).



(4) Camera. The room of investigation, the cavity of the mouth through the camera-eye placed on the inside of Christina's palm, she zooms into Old Man's eyeball. Rehearsal, April 2017. Copyright INTRA SPACE, 2017.

Project Team:

Wolfgang Tschapeller, Institute for Art and Architecture, Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. Esther Balfé, Faculty of Performing Arts, Dance, Music and Arts University of the City Vienna. Gabrielle Cram, Dramaturgy, Theory & Media Centre, Tanzquartier Vienna. Dennis Del Favero, iCinema Centre for Interactive Cinema Research, University of New South Wales. Dmytro Fedorenko, Institute of Fine Arts, Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. Christian Freude, Institute for Visual Computing & Human-Centered Technology, Technical University Vienna. Ursula Frohne, Institute for Art History, Westfälische Wilhelms-University Muenster. Nils Hasler, TheCaptury, Max-Planck Institute Saarbrücken. Christina Jauernik, Institute for Art and Architecture, Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. Krassimira Kruschkova, Institute for Art and Architecture, Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. Ludwig Löckinger, Institute of Fine Arts, Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. Mohammad Obaid, Design Lab, Department of Media and Visual Arts, Koç University Istanbul. Simon Oberhammer, Institute for Art and Architecture, Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. Martin Perktold, Institute for Art and Architecture, Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. Franz Pomassl, Institute of Fine Arts, Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. Diane Shooman, University of Art Linz, UAS Technikum-Vienna. Michael Thielscher, iCinema Centre for Interactive Cinema Research, University of New South Wales. Birk Weiberg, Institute for Contemporary Art Research, Zuerich University of the Arts. Yvonne Wilhelm, Institute for Contemporary Art Research, Zuerich University of the Arts. Michael Wimmer, Institute for Visual Computing & Human-Centered Technology, Technical University Vienna.

Advisory Board:

Karen Barad, Feminist Studies Department, University of California Santa Cruz. Marcos Cruz, The Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London. Bojana Kunst, Institute for Applied Theatre Studies, Justus-Liebig University Giessen. Sanford Kwinter, History and Theory of Architecture, University of Applied Arts Vienna. Maria Palazzi, Advanced Computing Center for the Arts and Design, Ohio State University. Juergen Sandkuehler, Center for Brain Research, Department of Neurophysiology, Medical University Vienna.

Bibliography

Alloa, E. (2012) *Das durchscheinende Bild. Konturen einer medialen Phänomenologie*. Zürich: diaphanes.
Barad, K. (2012) *What is the Measure of Nothingness? Infinity, Virtuality, Justice*. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz.

- Cram, G.; Zyman, D. (2008) *Other than Yourself. An Investigation between Inner and Outer Space*. TBA 21, Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König.
- LaBelle, B. (2014) *Lexicon of the mouth. Poetics and politics of voice and the oral imaginary*. London: Bloomsbury.

RECURSIVITY AS RADICAL SELF-REFERENTIALITY: VIDEO
REMIXING AS (SELF)DESTRUCTION AND (SELF)REGENERATION
Virginia Kuhn

Abstract

Unlike conventional discourses around remix, this paper frames video remixing as a regurgitation practice, one capable of incorporating research as well as its expression in the resultant artifact. By demonstrating the ways in which the form embraces polyvocality as well as historical precedent, a more generous and generative view of remix is possible, one that is infused with tactics based in rhetorical principles of argumentation. The extended notion of remix in this context may be seen as a radical approach of (self)destruction and (self)regeneration, one capable of overturning institutionally sanctioned epistemologies.

The 2017 death of John Berger and the attendant retrospectives sparked a reconsideration of his influence on my own work. Indeed, my 2005 dissertation was a nod to Berger's *Ways of Seeing*, the 1972 BBC television series which was later published in book form. In fact, this paper is something of a regurgitation, one that seemed particularly vital in the context of Brexit, the election of Donald Trump in the United States, as well as the more generalized move toward nationalism, conservatism and xenophobia worldwide. The world seems very much in need of critical theory.

The reuptake of my past work brought the realization that in many ways, I have been remixing it for many years. Or at the very least, I have been gorging on some key concepts and regurgitating them in various forms and through various disciplinary lenses. These core aspects of my work are encoded in the below lines culled from *Ways of Seeing*.¹

The art of the past no longer exists as it once did. Its authority is lost. In its place there is a language of images. What matters now is who uses that language for what purpose. (Berger, 1972)

¹ These lines also form the epigraph for an article I published in 2009, *Performing Life: Whose pictures are worth one thousand words?*, in *enculturation: a journal of rhetoric, writing, and culture*. 6.2
<http://enculturation.net/6.2/kuhn>

If Alexandre Astruc's 1948 conception of the *caméra-stylo* (the camera as pen) recognized the camera's ability to produce image-based compositions, Berger saw the potential for reproducing images already composed, and understood the political power they confer. My work focuses as much on 'found' footage and images as on their initial creation, since a language requires a vocabulary as its building blocks. *Ways of Seeing* is an accessible and transmediated version of the work of Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt School: in both its televisual and codex forms, it translates this theoretically dense material, while it also actuates the concepts by deploying the language of images. In so doing, it models a critically engaged approach to media, one that can be widely adopted. Similarly, I strive to create work that is accessible to a wide audience while retaining its conceptual and formal integrity.

My 2005 dissertation titled *Ways of Composing: Visual Literacy in the Digital Age* was created in a multimedia-authoring platform that allowed me to launch a nuanced argument in its 200+ pages of text, but also to deploy the argument in images, both still and moving, as well as in complex linking structures that take advantage of the Z axis of digital environments. And although the status of my doctorate was uncertain for many months, I held my ground in order to intervene in issues surrounding fair use, citation practices, and archiving conventions. My assertion was (and remains) that if we cite words but ask permission to use image-based media, we effectively let Hollywood dictate who may speak, silencing voices of opposition. And the power of remix lies in its restaging of mass media—in fact, critical engagement often requires its dismemberment and recapitulation as a mode of sustained analysis. The increasingly conglomerated media landscape makes remix a critical/communicative form, not only an expressive one. Done well, it is capable of relaying complexity and nuance, both logically and affectively.

Approaching remix rhetorically means rejecting the fetishisation of an originary artefact that is untouchable and intractable. It resists the 'false religiosity' that has been bestowed upon art, as well as the 'obfuscation' that tends to accompany traditional art criticism (Berger, 1972). Indeed, when removed from the exclusive realm of art, one can see the possibilities for revision and research-based iteration. In purely strategic terms, a rhetorical approach to remix means it can be peer reviewed, and this renders its publication legible to institutional entities and academic reward systems. The digital work I have published has been peer reviewed, with the exception of a few pieces that were invited and editorially reviewed. Although often conflated, I think it vital to distinguish between *public* and *published*, the latter indicating a jurying body, the former simply referring to things put online.

Remix is inherently polyvocal, since it uses previously articulated media. And while the form has been said to actualize Mikhail Bakhtin's conception of 'heteroglossia,' I find it more interesting and provocative to approach remix as a form of the carnivalesque (Bakhtin, 1968). For Bakhtin, the carnivalesque is collective, it democratises participation and it allows individuals to take on new identities (unlike individuals in a crowd, who are together but alone in their uniqueness). The conception of the carnivalesque allows me to infect the critical with some much needed creativity, rather than bringing the critical to bear on the creative. It grants me the freedom to move away from standard film forms that tend to use words as mere subtitles, and layering as merely transitional. The carnivalesque also allows me to move away from textual argument and employ what critical theorist Gregory Ulmer refers to as a sense of the 'felt' (Ulmer, 2006). The word text, as Ulmer explains, issues from the manufacture of textiles which are constructed by weaving. Felt, on the other hand, not only suggests the affective register of feelings, but its 'hook and eye' construction is more consonant with the blending of various semiotic registers that the digital makes possible. *Metonymy*, one of my remix videos, exemplifies this approach (Kuhn, 2012), as does *Images in, of, and Time* (Kuhn, 2016).

In addition to creating my own video remixes, I have edited several collections of video essays. The first of these collections was published more than a decade ago, long before the current blossoming of journals that publish peer reviewed video essays and other natively digital work. Further, three of the four digital collections I have undertaken include a unique user interface that contains the individual pieces. In general, these interfaces require one to traverse the textual portion before accessing the digital pieces, and they also include citations in a prominent place. This seemed crucial, particularly early on, when digital scholarship was suspect, as a signal that my conception of digital scholarship embraced all semiotic registers and was not intent on eliminating words—writing is, after all, a technology itself—but rather on enhancing and extending them with other media.

Taking a contrastive approach, one learns far more about what words can do when comparing them to images and vice versa. This approach also provides a reminder that the digital is not a break with all that has come before, even as it has unique affordances. It took me years to acquire the ability to meaningfully engage scholarship that is expressed across the registers of word, sound, image and interactivity, in order to marshal revisions of this work based on its own terms, rather than applying a text-based model to it. The criteria for gauging the efficacy of digital projects helps in identifying its merits and the rubric used in my institution has been adopted widely (Kuhn, 2010).

If we define digital literacy as competent control of the available semiotic resources, it follows that research, scholarship and pedagogy are inextricably bound. My research often actualizes within the classes I teach, and my teaching, in turn, informs my research and scholarship. The ways in which these areas overlap is perhaps best illustrated by considering a main research project of mine: the VAT (Video Analysis Tableau).² The VAT is a software workbench, supported mainly by the National Science Foundation (NSF), which uses supercomputing architecture to process vast video archives in order to automate the indexing of moving image media using computer vision algorithms. The goal is to make these archives discoverable and accessible to research, this vital area of cultural production. The corollary goal is to help establish best practices for work in the emergent area of cultural analytics, broadly defined as applying computational methods to the study of art and culture.

The VAT project initially grew out of my own remix work, although the urgent need for such a tool was crystallized during the 2008 grant-funded course I developed that uses video archives as core course texts. Based on the logistical and technological obstacles to indexing and accessing these archives for the purposes of research and teaching, I spent the next few years pursuing the Large Scale Video Analytics project (now the VAT) and was the only arts and humanities researcher to receive an allocation on the world's first flash memory supercomputer run by the NSF's Extreme Research and Discovery Environment.³ Working across disciplines this way requires one to relinquish safe and familiar discourses and methods. This is often painful and frustrating as communication becomes belaboured. That said, the benefits are numerous as one must express and defend ideas and either amend them or redouble one's commitment to them.

While for many years my work had been considered too radical for academia in the U.S., this view has shifted significantly over the last few years as the need for theory/practice models has become more apparent. There is a growing awareness that innovations in technological infrastructure require the input of arts and humanities disciplines, since while computer scientists imagine what *could* be, we imagine what *should* be. We can be activists with regard to issues of free speech, diversity and privacy—issues that are increasingly inseparable from technological concerns. Moreover, the burgeoning of the Digital Humanities reflects shifting

² For more on the VAT project, please see: <http://www.thevatproject.org/>

³ Aptly named Gordon, this flash supercomputer functions like a giant thumb drive with no spinning disks (Graham, 2011). It was thought that it would greatly increase image processing but has since been replaced by other computer architecture.

attitudes on the part of members of traditional humanities disciplines, and there is rampant interest in technology-enhanced epistemologies. In short, remix video is an emergent form of cultural production, one that can incorporate research in its planning and construction and one that can expand the terms of arts based research.

Bibliography

- Bakhtin, M. (1968). *Rabelais and his world*. Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press.
- Berger, J. (1972). *Ways of seeing*. London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books.
- Graham, M. (2011). Meet Gordon, the world's first flash supercomputer. *Wired Magazine*. [online] Available at: <https://www.wired.com/2011/12/gordon-supercomputer/>
- Kuhn, V. (2010). Speaking with Students: Profiles in Digital Pedagogy. *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, [online] 14(2). Available at: <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/14.2/interviews/kuhn/>.
- Kuhn, V. (2012). MoMLA: From Gallery to Webtext. *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, [online] 17(2). Available at: <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/17.2/topoi/vitanza-kuhn/index.html>.
- Kuhn, V. (2016). Images in, of, and Time. *The CineFiles*, [online] 11. Available at: http://www.thecine-files.com/images-in-of-and-time_issue11/.
- Ulmer, G. (2006). *Electronic monuments*. Minneapolis [u.a.]: University of Minnesota Press.

RECEIVING QUEERLY DISPLACED UTTERANCE: FAILURE AND/
AS RESPONSE IN WORKS BY GLENN LIGON AND LOW PROFILE
Mark Leahy

Abstract

This paper looks at two works that complicate the condition of the utterance and the reception of performance, through an interplay of repetitions, reiterations, absences and occupations. The works are Low Profile *Impromptu* (Athenaeum, Plymouth 2016), and Glenn Ligon *Live* (Camden Arts Centre, London 2014). These works as events, tease apart voice – body / body – presence / document – absence pairings, and reiterate these as both/and. The paper takes up the question of queer as a research term, and queering as an active research strategy. In part it responds to an expansion or distribution of the term, and considers how it may be usefully employed to extend or complicate the discussion of art works. Reading Stephen Best, and aware of the work of Jack Halberstam on queer failure, and of queer voice in Freya Jarman-Ivens, the paper performs a reading of these events that redistributes the reception experience across body, voice, space and site.

Introduction

This paper considers two installations, a multi-screen video work *Live* (2014) by Glenn Ligon, and *Impromptu* (2015-16), a sound and light work by LOW PROFILE. Both reuse material from popular culture (material that has had a life in mass circulation, in concert, on disc, on VHS, sold in high street outlets, swapped and borrowed, and having a wide and enthusiastic fan base). Both projects resituate the performance material to a gallery or art setting; it is here that I encountered them, and it is as a member of that art audience that I began to consider a response to them.

In the decision to begin with the work on queer voice by Freya Jarman-Ivens I deliberately came at the term from a site not located in sexuality, not linked to choice of partner, sexual expression, or genital play. This strategy was intended to open up the potential for application, for play, but was not designed to denature the possibility of criticism, to defuse the potential for critique. If a queer position occupies an in-between, other, potential space, if it avoids decisiveness and direction, then how can it point to a 'better' 'improved' outcome? or is its usefulness in (not) failing, in (not) regressing, in (not) missing?

If queer / queering / queerness is to (mal)function as a theoretical frame or mode, then what must it (un)do, bring about? is it applicable in any and all circumstances, or must it be matched to specific types of work? This question might be asked of any tool or method, but if the queer tool is less likely to find its match among the cultural products, is there a chance that this 'wrong' tool can generate a strong mis-reading, a resistant analysis? Or, is this inversion model falling into a productivist trap, where the efficacy of critical work is assessed on a model of production: how many new ideas are generated, how much new knowledge is born, and a queer reading is judged by how much it makes? This reverses any claim that it might resist (re)production, that it can keep the focus on play, on present pleasure, on the dying now.

So where does this get me with my queer reading of the works I proposed to focus on? A classic lesbian and gay studies approach might begin with Glenn Ligon's sexuality, or Freddie Mercury's homosexuality (their gayness?) and consider this to be a key element of both works, though neither work foregrounds these aspects. This may be a case of passing for straight, or other questions may take precedence. Ligon's queer biography has entered his practice, but does so alongside race, nation and class; and the layers of displacement in *Impromptu* shift attention from Mercury's private life to the performance of his performance. Another queer studies reading might focus on the camp qualities at work in the tribute act, or in the television show *Stars in their Eyes*; or perhaps on the revelations in the recently published Quincey Jones interview where he discusses Richard Pryor's sexual exploits in the 1970s (Marchese, 2018).

Another tweaking of the queer nipple might look at the artist duo LOW PROFILE as a same-sex pairing, working perhaps in opposition to the solo male genius template of Modernist art production, though this queer reading might be occluded by a feminist and perhaps class reading. And while a reading of the treatment of Richard Pryor's body in *Live* – objectified, fragmented, focusing on the isolated parts – might repurpose a queer gaze, the work is as likely to demand a consideration of this as a black body, and contrast Ligon's dismemberment with Kenneth Goldsmith's appropriation of Michael Brown's autopsy (see Steinhauer, 2018), so that the persistence of racism overshadows a queer interpretation. These misfires in (mis)reading these works, may indicate that they do not mean solely as queer, but that they need to be read as intersectional, as cross- or hybrid-theoretical contexts.

And then, why decide to focus on these works through the concept of utterance? A simple answer is that I was working with voice and utterance in my practice (and in my teaching) and was finding the slipperiness of the term, the concept,

difficult to manage. There was a slipperiness of the thing itself, if I could manage to see it, find it, hold it long enough to consider it, and a slipperiness when I read others' treatment of it. The thing (such as I could name it) was queer in terms of its refusal to conform to a mode, to remain in a category, to belong. It was queer in its promiscuity, playing with and not playing with, other concepts and other activities. Does a consideration of utterance, utterance as queered in some respect, offer a self-pleasuring, looping, regressive, non-directive, targetless model for looking at these works? Does a queer reading of the works offer a way of briefly catching hold of utterance, without limiting this to matters of gender or sexuality?

Queer Voices

In *Queer Voices* (2011), Freya Jarman-Ivens uses the possibilities offered by the concept of queer to discuss a number of vocal performers and performances specifically in terms of their disruption or distortion of vocal norms. Jarman-Ivens writes that voice 'functions in a "third space" in between the voicer and the listener; and that it operates as a mediator between body and language, which are gendered spaces.' (Jarman-Ivens, 13) In addition to these qualities, Jarman-Ivens claims voice 'holds queer potential' in its 'lying at the intersection of two interlinked facets of the voice: it is genderless, and it is performative'. (Jarman-Ivens, 18)

The concept of voice thus offers a model for thinking queerly about utterance, about identity, about meaning; and vocal work offers potential for a queering of representation, of the norm, of authority. In being performative, the voice can be effective, can make things happen, but as queerly performative, this making happen 'dramatises incoherencies' and 'focuses on mismatches' in allegedly stable categories or positions. (Jarman-Ivens, 16-17)

Some voices may perform these dramatized incoherencies more obviously than others, but it is my contention that the voice always has the capacity for such dramatization because of the inherent separation of the speaker/singer from the listener. (Jarman-Ivens, 17)

Queerness operates in a diverse manner across the two works considered here, *Live* (2014) by Glenn Ligon, and *Impromptu* (2015) by LOW PROFILE. It operates across the persons of the artists involved, across the cultural works cited within them, and across site, audience, event, and utterances present in the works. Queerness or queering of the position of author/artist occurs through the disruption of the individual author position in distribution across a duo, or through the stripping away of the most notable aspect of an artist's utterance to leave an alternative, othered utterance, or through displacing the star with the impersonator. These actions in their operations in-between, in their refusal of

stability, in presenting the constructedness of 'natural' or 'normal' vocal labels, are actively queering.

Stephen Best further extends consideration of the effects of queering, or the acknowledgements with which it is working. He discusses a number of artists who are producing queer objects,

queer not because of the artist's assumed sexual identity (though there is that) but as a way of distinguishing the object's inadequacy to sustain the representational claims made on its behalf, queer in the sense of offering 'a disruption that thwarts efforts to determine political goals according to a model of representation,' queer to the extent that 'refusing to accept the adequacy of given forms, which is also to say, the sufficiency of any social positivization, grounds antinormative politics.' (Best 2015, 199)

For Best, queering in the work of the black artists whose work he considers, offers a method or mode that resists the resolution of opposition by recourse to binary models, that does not answer disappearance with a familiar representation, that does not accept a positive norm as reparative of negation.

Built into this queer making is 'the sense of producing their own failure', these works 'set themselves up to fail'. (Best, 199) This incorporation of failure as in and of the work recalls and reverses the anxiety J. L. Austin felt over the functioning of his performatives (Austin, 1962), or that H. P. Grice felt about the imputing of belief (Grice, 1975); the failure of the utterance is not an end, or a closing, or a conclusion, it remains in operation, going on failing, and continuing to call to the audience, to resonate in the space of action, to misalign and skew and disturb without a full stop.

Pryor's Body

In *Live*, Richard Pryor's body is presented for detailed looking, his black male body is presented in parts, in a parallel to the fetishising look of pornography and the pseudo-objective scientific looking of anthropology or the coloniser (Fig. 1). Ligon has addressed both these spectacular practices in works such as *Notes on the Margins of the Black Book* (1991-1993), where he re-presented Robert Mapplethorpe's images of nude black men accompanied by comments that resituated them within discourses around race, class, or privilege, they had been removed from or presented in ignorance of (Guggenheim, 2018).

In not quite matching anthropological or pornographic discourses Ligon has set up a queer looking, that acknowledges Pryor as 'something to see', but in its obsessive and disciplined looking goes too far. Ligon in other art works has

pushed text or images beyond their immediate function through patterning and reiteration, turning an utterance into noise or stuff as sounds blend and letters blur or smudge.

Ligon has challenged the apparent transparency of language by changing the intended conditions of its display and reproduction. These changes have resulted in language that is difficult, and sometimes impossible, to see. (Meyer 1998)

In seeing these works, the attention shifts from the semantic content of a text to semiotic associations allowing for multiple readings of the written, painted or printed word. In Ligon's paintings of Richard Pryor jokes, for example, *Mudbone (Liar #2)*, it appears only the words remain, and that sound, context, and movement have been stripped off, leaving a silent still utterance (see Regen Projects, 2018). However, in reading, the words are sounded in the viewer's mind, drawing on memory of having seen Pryor perform, or by association with the cultural stereotypes his act put on display. Similarly, in *Live* the viewer may recall the sound of the live event, may read on Pryor's lips or in his gestures details of the spoken text, but they are shifted into her voice, into her mouth.



Figure 1: Glenn Ligon, *Live* (2014) photo: Farzad Owrang.

And these utterances don't stay in place, don't belong to one position, that of the artist, or of the viewer, or of Pryor. In a silent statement where does the utterance reside, in the gesture, or in the act of decoding that signal? Is the work *Live* an utterance by Ligon (he has placed this material here in this way), or does it still belong to Pryor, or does it reside in the recognition or interpretation or activation of it by the audience? Perhaps Stephen Best's description of this as 'oscillation,

which is really a kind of stasis (a failure to either come or go), or the possibility of inhabiting no place in particular' (Best, 187), gives a sense of this multiplicity, and yet possible negation of utterance.

Silenced and dispersed in this installation, Pryor's body is at once present as event and is disappeared, dislocated. The fragmentation perhaps offers a possibility of reassembly, of recovery, of remembering, as parts might be brought together to rebuild Pryor's body. But as Stephen Best suggests in a discussion of work by Mark Bradford the fragment can resist this recovery by reminding the viewer that the 'whole' or the 'more' cannot be fully experienced.

Fragment is thus not limited to a dynamic of part and whole but corresponds to notions of disturbance, interruption, performance [...]. From the perspective of the fragment, the goal is deliberately to frustrate, derange, and disrupt the project of historical reconstruction. (Best, 201)

Ligon offers the viewer the body in parts, the body without the sound of the voice, a scattered display of gestures, of utterances, that defy reassembly and disrupt any project of reconstructing Richard Pryor. Pryor continues to resist closure, his utterances remain disruptive despite and because of the violence done to his image in this work. That violent utterance reiterates the continuing violence done to black bodies.

If the official state colonising utterance inscribes the black body, reading off of it the message it projects, that utterance that is thrown against and bounces off the described, located, taxonomised, read body, then Ligon's messy non-reflective scattering surfaces, skins, screens absorb that utterance, disrupt the simple throw and bounce; the call and response is not a simple 'I give, you return', but a stickier distorted reverberation. The fragments of body, of gesture, of action, of word, accumulate and recall or suggest but do not coalesce into a reassuring whole. There is a failure of the message, a collapse of the utterance that queers the structures of race, of gender, of power, and makes a gap where other meanings, readings, failings happen.



Figure 2: LOW PROFILE, *Impromptu* (2016) photo: Anna Barclay.

Mullen's Mercury

If Glenn Ligon presents Richard Pryor in pieces, to be observed, then LOW PROFILE in their installation *Impromptu* (Fig. 2), present a version of Freddie Mercury, not to be seen, but to be heard, heard again. In a show of sounds and lights, that pulse on then off, in synch, the audience is addressed with a series of vocal sounds. And many of them will know these sounds, these phrases are recognisable, they're not random sequences of phonemes. These are portions of the performance repertoire of Freddie Mercury.

What the audience hears in the space are excised phrases from Mercury's improvisations during Queen's live shows. 'Alright!' 'Everything's gonna be alright!' 'I think I'm gonna stay around.' These phrases would be sung to an expectant crowd, and in a 'you sing what I sing', call and response manner they would be repeated by the fans. These exchanges became a key part of the live shows, and audiences participated in them enthusiastically. Here in *Impromptu* the sounds uttered are stripped of their context, excised from the live show. They emerge in tandem with the burst of light, the volume reflected in the intensity of the light, then the phrase ends and the light fades.

In the gap following each outburst as the audience are again in near darkness, a response can be imagined, the many voices of the crowd calling back to the singer, acknowledging that they have recognised, that they are happy to be called into being as fans, as followers of Queen. In the gap, the shape of the absent utterance is held, is 'heard' by the present audience. The 'silence' between the utterances is occupied by remembered or recognised utterance, not (always) vocalised, but having the shape of vocal expression. In the installation some

members of the audience did respond, did sing back to the lights. They performed as they knew other audiences did, recognising their role, and filling in for other absent earlier audiences.

In some way another absence is at work in the installation, as the voice we hear is not the voice of Freddie Mercury. We recognise these utterances as belonging to Mercury, but what we hear here is the voice of professional Mercury impersonator Garry Mullen (see *LOW PROFILE*, 2018a). An impersonation already carries with it some sense of being beside itself, of being doubly oriented, to the original, and to the present performance. Mullen's singing of these excerpts enfolds in itself Mercury's performances of them, but also Mercury's performance as Freddie Mercury, signalled in the title of the BBC documentary *The Great Pretender* (*The Great Pretender*, 2012). Freya Jarman-Ivens points to vocal impersonation as drawing attention to or revealing the performative character of voice in itself, as well as the performative nature of 'self'. (Jarman-Ivens, 44-5) In striving for or seeking to emulate or mimic an imagined or ideal version of the voice, which Jarman-Ivens terms Voice-Zero (Jarman-Ivens, 50), impersonators will always miss, hit wide of the mark, overreach themselves.

She discusses the TV show *Stars In Their Eyes*, and the queer occurrence of multiple versions of certain stars, so that the tenth anniversary video includes three 'Celine Dions,' two 'Frank Sinatras,' three 'Chers,' and three 'Tom Joneses.' (53) She concludes that impersonation, as presented on shows like *Stars*, is 'queer on several counts' (57):

it involves a merging of selves in which is contained the potential for merging multiply gendered selves; the moments of failure, of vocal flawedness, reveal something of the tenuous existence of [Voice Zero]; and therefore they reveal the sign-ness of the voice and the tenuous relationship of voice to Self. (58)

Alongside the homage implicit in an impersonator's performance, is the competitive aspect of the TV show which brought Mullen to wider public notice. Here the business of getting the voice right is complicated by the need to win over the audience and get it more right than the other competitors, to get closer to Voice-Zero as remembered by the viewers. *LOW PROFILE* have used the format or content of television programmes or game shows in other works, including *DRY RUN Part 4: MacGyver'thon* (2008-2010) which was constructed around a box-set of the TV show *MacGyver* (*LOW PROFILE*, 2018b); or *LOW PROFILE presents: A Lesson in Love* (2003-2010) where the duo attempted to recite a list of 100 songs related to love (*LOW PROFILE*, 2018c). There were elements of contest and endurance in these works, as well as participation and contribution

from the audience. As with the participation of the audience in *Impromptu*, the audience for *Stars In Their Eyes* were called on to recognise, to judge, to recall; they were expected to know and play by these rules, to understand the conventions. All these activities will have a bearing on how the utterance is received, on how the text is read, how it means on this occasion, and in queering this utterance the responses are complicated, the roles muddled, the answers multiple.

In the event *Impromptu*, there is a series of utterances and in these there are a number of displacements, of absences, of occupations that cannot be simply structured as a set of binary oppositions. Nor can they be understood as a series of deferrals. The fact that LOW PROFILE are two artists, Hannah Jones and Rachel Dobbs, who operate as a single author further queers the status of their utterance, and their 'two-ness' disrupts expectations of a unified statement, of an unequivocal reading. The events of expression and reception are not sequential, there are multiple positions and places of utterance and reception, and movements from and to these positions. There are failures, gaps and sutures in the texture of the work, and it is among these that the experience, the event of the work occurs.

Conclusion

In these two projects, Glenn Ligon's *Live* and LOW PROFILE's *Impromptu*, I suggest that there is a situation of queer making producing its own failure, in particular the failure of the utterance. The collapse of the utterance makes a gap where other failings happen, where there is potential for other queer events. This gap has the shape of vocal expression, and is provisionally occupied by other voices. In the decision to begin with the work on queer voice by Freya Jarman-Ivens I deliberately came at the term from a site not located in sexuality, choice of partner, or genital play. This strategy intended to open up the potential for application, for play, but was not designed to denature the possibility of criticism, to defuse the potential for critique. If a queer reading occupies an in-between, other, potential space, if it avoids decisiveness and direction, then can it also generate new information or propose new ideas? or is its usefulness in a resistance to (re)production, that keeps the focus on play, on present pleasure, on failing now?

Bibliography

- Austin, J. L. (1962) *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Best, S. (2015) 'Come and Gone', *Small Axe* 19(3), pp. 186–204.
- Grice, H. (1975) 'Logic and Conversation', in P. Cole & J. L. Morgan (eds.) *Syntax and Semantics: Speech Acts*. New York: Academic Press, pp. 41–58.

- Guggenheim (2018) *Glenn Ligon Notes on the Margin of the Black Book*.
<https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/10382> (Accessed: 21st April 2018).
- Jarman-Ivens, F. (2011) *Queer Voices: Technologies, Vocalities, and the Musical Flaw*.
New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ligon, G. (2014) *Live*. [Installation]. Camden Arts Centre, London, 16 November 2014.
- Owring, F. (2016) 'Glenn Ligon, "Live"'. Available at:
<https://hyperallergic.com/287359/glenn-ligon-deconstructs-richard-pryors-stand-up/> (Downloaded: 17th April 2018).
- LOW PROFILE (2015) *Impromptu*. [Installation] Athenaeum Auditorium,
Plymouth, 24 September 2015.
- LOW PROFILE (2018a) *Impromptu*. Available at: <http://we-are-low-profile.com/~wearelow/impromptu/> (Accessed: 24th April 2018).
- LOW PROFILE (2018b) *DRY RUN Part 4: MacGyver'thon*. Available at:
<https://we-are-low-profile.com/~wearelow/dryrun4-macgyverthon/> (Accessed: 24th April 2018).
- LOW PROFILE (2018c) *LOW PROFILE presents: A Lesson in Love*. Available at:
<https://we-are-low-profile.com/~wearelow/a-lesson-in-love/> (Accessed: 24th April 2018).
- Marchese, D. (2018) 'In Conversation: Quincy Jones', *New York Magazine*,
February. Available at: <http://www.vulture.com/2018/02/quincy-jones-in-conversation.html> (Accessed: 11th April 2018).
- Meyer, R. (1998) 'Borrowed Voices: Glenn Ligon and the Force of Language',
QueerCulturalCentre.org. Available at:
<http://www.queerculturalcenter.org/Pages/Ligon/LigonEssay.html> (Accessed: 16th May 2017).
- Regen Projects (2018) *Glenn Ligon Text Paintings 1990-2004*. Available at:
<http://www.regenprojects.com/exhibitions/glenn-ligon/selected-works?view=slider#3> (Accessed: 22nd April 2018).
- Steinhauer, J. (2015) 'Kenneth Goldsmith Remixes Michael Brown Autopsy Report as Poetry', *hyperallergic.com*. Available at:
<https://hyperallergic.com/190954/kenneth-goldsmith-remixes-michael-brown-autopsy-report-as-poetry/> (Accessed: 11th April 2018).
- The Great Pretender* (2012) [DVD-ROM] BBC. Available: Eagle Rock.

EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL ECOLOGIES: THE ASTRONAUT, THE ROBOT, THE ALIEN AS RETROFLECTORS

Ralo Mayer

Abstract

Space and ecology share a long common history in fact and fiction, in popular culture as much as in science. The video installation and essay film *Extra-Terrestrial Ecologies* traces this complex through methods of artistic research like performative research and essayistic approaches. The work was presented at *Artistic Research Will Eat Itself* as a screening of the video and a brief introduction and discussion of the project's development from lecture performance to installation and film, its methods, and storytelling approaches.

Background

As part of my PhD-project *Space Un/Settlements*, the installation and essay film *Extra-Terrestrial Ecologies* (43 min.) explores the relations between outer space and ecology. While being mostly concerned with speculative futures, the space-ecology complex is at the same time in a direct feedback loop with actual earthly realities: the best known example is the *Whole Earth* photo by the Apollo astronauts, which became an icon for the new ecological movement as well as the counter-culture of the late 1960s.

As a late echo of some of the 1960's ideas and movements, the 1990s' experiment *Biosphere 2* reveals a different interpretation of space and ecology: its closed ecological system, built to test future space settlements, integrates biological, technological and cultural circuits and parallels discussions of the nature-culture divide in Science, Technology and Society Studies.

Description & Synopsis

Like Frankenstein's monster, *Extra-Terrestrial Ecologies* is patched together from popular movies, biographical elements, footage from *Biosphere 2* and other experiments, AI-generated images, and countless other sources. The intertwined storylines are told through three protagonists—the astronaut, the robot, the alien—across 28 chapters, or "scenes", for example:

- *Blade Runner* and its space colony background restaged in an abandoned autoshop yard
- *E.T.*, queer ecologist and performer, visits *Biosphere 2* and gets lost in *Vertigo's* Redwood forest
- Donna Haraway and Bruno Latour advise a Biospherian theater sketch and Jacques Derrida haunts space station Mir.
- retroflective material, used for creating some of the best-known SF film backgrounds, is also employed to prepare the measuring/colonization of space through the Lunar Laser Ranging experiment's retroreflectors.

Ecology and space, far from Earth, are literally un-settling (*un-heimlich*) and can be interpreted as what Timothy Morton calls "dark ecology". Matt Damon's astronaut in *The Martian*, a recent popular ecologist in space, is a rather one-dimensional example compared to earlier ecologically inspired astronauts, their robotic *machines of loving grace*, and the inherent, yet ungraspable alien nature of ecology.

Documentation



Scenes & Refrains from Extra-Terrestrial Ecologies.

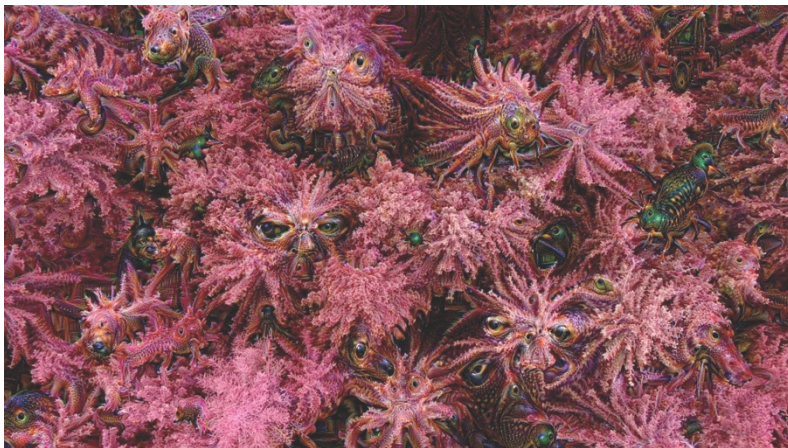
Retroflective textile, tensegrities, variable dimensions. Installation view, Salonul de proiecte, Bucharest 2017



I'm gonna get myself connected 1993 (Extra-Terrestrial Ecologies), 2017
Double-sized vinyl album cover sleeve, 63x63cm. Installation detail, Salonul de proiecte,
Bucharest, 2017



Extra-Terrestrial Ecologies (Reflectors: the astronaut, the robot, the alien), 2017 (Video still)



Extra-Terrestrial Ecologies (Reflectors: the astronaut, the robot, the alien), 2017 (Video still)

Bibliography

- Blade Runner*. (1982). [film] Directed by R. Scott. Warner Bros.
- Brautigan, R. (1968). *The pill versus the Springhill mine disaster*. New York: Dell Pub. Co.
- Derrida, J. (1994). *Specters of Marx: the state of the debt, the work of mourning, and the New International*. London: Routledge
- E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial*. (1982). [film] Directed by S. Spielberg. Universal Pictures.
- Haraway, D. (2008). *When Species Meet*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Latour, B. (2002). *We have never been modern*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Morton, T. (2007). *Ecology without nature*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- The Martian*. (2015). [film] Directed by R. Scott. 20th Century Fox.
- Vertigo*. (1958). [film] Directed by A. Hitchcock. Paramount Pictures.

IN DEFENCE OF STUPIDITY

Elfie Miklautz

Abstract

The aim of my contribution is a kind of paradoxical intervention. I want to challenge the process of gaining a reputation in art by underlining its intellectual potential and claiming its research-like properties. I can see by now that there is some reverse motion going on in that scientific studies have revealed the unpredictability and serendipity of research. And this, in its turn, is forcing us to change our view as to its teleological predictability. Nevertheless, artistic research seems to be applying scientific methods to gain academic reputation and funding for research projects. Instead of preserving and protecting the specificities of artistic work – its unconscious, ineffable, non-teleological, unexpected character – artistic research forces itself into the bondage of scientific research practices. So the question is if there is any place left for the ineffable and idiosyncratic. What are the consequences of an increasing disciplining, evaluation, and control? It might be that the outcomes will lose their density and richness altogether, ending up more artificial than artistic. I therefore plea to rescue art by following William Kentridge who has pointed out the necessity of the studio as a safe space for stupidity where uncontrolled searching can take place.

As a sociologist, I am well aware of the problem of research applications and proposals. I have done lots of qualitative social research, and I know that a submission requesting funding always needs to fulfil the expectations of a very strict teleological approach. Not only the aim, but also the 'how to get there' needs stating very precisely. Ideally speaking, this should involve the formulation of theses and even contain potential results very early on, and yet these are requirements which countermand the particularities of qualitative research from the start. This means, for instance, that there should be a largely unprejudiced and open access when tabling the subject in the first place, which is in distinct contrast to any pre-formulating of hypotheses. After all, these should be allowed to develop in the course of the research process itself. There should also be room for, and openness towards the unexpected; for surprises and, in particular, for an underlying methodological attitude and basic approach which needs to be ready and

willing to define, and continuously redefine, the path to be taken depending on the relevant new findings. Therefore, the focus should be process oriented, and not so much only goal oriented. As it is, qualitative research applications are often rejected by the subsidy-granting funding organisations on the grounds that they normally do not meet the given requirements. Knowing this, people try to dodge round it by building Potemkin villages from kind of 'prefabricated' project units. There are reasons to believe that this strategy is also applied when writing proposals for applications to subsidise artistic research. However, such an approach has various consequences. First, it gives a totally wrong impression of the research process and, secondly, there is a performative effect from announcements of this nature. I.e., there is a great likelihood that in the course of the research process itself these pre-announced paths are taken, and the yielded results will hardly go beyond the anticipated, or any originally stated ambition. And this, in its turn, weakens the innate quality of artistic practice, to say the least. Strictly speaking, it gets betrayed altogether in this approach.

One can keep on the safe side and adjust to the situation, but this will not remain just an external phenomenon. Allow me to say this very clearly – artistic activity, even when in the close vicinity to science, will always add an extra to the range of how we explore the world. But 'damage' is only avoided when we are aware that procedures of this kind ignore genuine artistic ways of 'productivity'.

In any case, my interest follows the opposite direction: it is borne from the hope that the approximation of science and art will cause science to make a move, and I sincerely wish that the existing rigid divorce of reason and passion may become more permeable. This, in its turn, would mean new resources for science: it would give way to wonder, astonishment, and emotion with no need to conceal these any further. So far, there are hardly any signs in this direction. In fact, of all the various disciplines, only philosophy is moving towards an aesthetic way of thinking. We can see this reflected in the work of Gilles Deleuze, to give an example. Of course, philosophy opening up in the direction of artistic activity is not at all a new thing and cannot therefore be ascribed to the establishing of artistic research as a 'new occurrence'. Let us think, in this context, of Walter Benjamin whose thinking in images is an early example of this. Ludwig Wittgenstein (1977, p.53) was of the opinion that his philosophy could, truthfully, only be rendered in poetry. According to Bertrand Russell, Wittgenstein refused to substantiate his claims argumentatively since this would destroy their beauty of thought (Russell, cited in Frank 1989, p.42).

As I pointed out before – permeability in the reverse direction is much, much stronger: the arts seem to be completely taken by the idea of finding a rapprochement to scientific research and this development is, at least partly, detrimental to art itself in the sense that it imposes restrictions on what might (otherwise) be a possibility of its own accord.

The witnessed blurring of the delineation between science and art has entailed changes to do both with the internal organisation of the areas, i.e. the determination of what gets acknowledged as a legitimate working procedure on the one hand, and the social contextualisation on the other hand. When we envisage the areas as ‘social fields’ in the sense of Pierre Bourdieu, it becomes evident that the power relations within the field have started to change. It can be said of both types of changes – the work immanent and the social ones – that they manifest more strongly in the arts than in the scientific disciplines. Rather, the sciences have been shown to remain, comparatively speaking, untouched by artistic interventions and cooperations in their paradigmatic mission as well as in their social structure. The impact on the arts, on the other hand, is considerable in that they are pushing themselves to become more and more ‘academic’. Certainly, this goes for those actors who hold positions in tertiary educational institutions.

Now let me explore the question of how the artistic field has undergone a change: my impression is that what we are experiencing here is a distinct restructuring of the whole field. Let us look at the ‘artistic field’ using the singular, for the time being. Strictly speaking, we would need to look at the individual areas separately and individually. When looking more closely, we can see that what is happening in the visual arts is not identical to the literature or music scenes, and so on. Ignoring the specific differences for the moment, there seems to be the establishing of a new kind of hierarchy, with those forces which bear more witness to the ‘major orders’ of research and science gaining in power. Hand in hand with this, a completely new social character of artist is evolving – some kind of professional image, and occupational profile. We can see new recruitment mechanisms for the holders of field-internal positions of power, new access barriers to enter the field and, also, new ways to gain reputation. For example, in the visual arts, when tabling the question of ‘who creates the creator’, it is usually the galleries, museums, art historians, juries of competitions and prize-winning procedures, well-established artists, and the media perception who play a central role while academic institutions figure much less in comparison. The

latter referred mainly to artists who – as teachers – are important gate keepers or mentors for their students. At the moment, we are witnessing a major change here.

We must bear in mind that even twenty years ago, the image of the artist as a quirky loner was more a cliché than reality. Even then, being recognised and winning a place in the sun was not possible without a social network. But still – the difference to what is required now is substantial. Recently, there has been a rush to push ahead in the race for subsidies, to be experienced in the phrasing of research applications, to have international networks, and to know all about the topical debate on artistic research, together with epistemological reflective expertise, to be methodologically and methodically firm, and so on, and so forth. What we see is a ‘survival of the fittest’ in the run for funding pools. In order to gain a professorship at an arts college or arts university, what is needed is not mere international renown as an artist, but proof of the knowledge of how to gain third-party funds. Quantifiable characteristics have long won the upper hand over qualitative assessment criteria. The change that I have just tried to outline is, by the way, one that has affected also the scientific university institutes. There, of course, the trigger was not ‘trying to move closer in the direction of the arts’. For me, it is hard to see how the generation coming after me needs to act in order to find appropriate jobs. There seems hardly any space left for intrinsic motivation and curious exploring. ‘Streamlining’ is what is needed now, and subjects that prompt success, with publications in highly renowned journals and questions that do not court controversy when it comes to finding answers, etc. – We are all aware of that.

So, the artistic field is shaping itself anew. Needless to say that artistic practice itself cannot remain untouched by this. Either the field will differentiate further and come up with relatively autonomous, self-reproducing sub-units, or the development will lead to a new nobility concerning the titles, research competence and participation, i.e. all those contributing to the reputation of a ‘noble’ science. We can foresee the appearance of new ‘rebels’ because they always tend to appear in social fields when structures solidify, or threaten to become encrusted altogether. Let us think here of the art academies in France during the 19th century, when the establishment was in control of access to the field, while it was the outsiders who fostered the development of the arts.

Now, let us first address the issue of the work-immanent consequences of an increased self-perception of artistic practice in terms of research activities.

First of all, in this context, let us look into the prerequisites to be able to call artistic practice 'research'. What we need is a collective frame of reference within which one's action takes place, and against whose background we find a possible orientation, i.e., having the possibility to compare oneself. Also, there needs to be discursivity, and exchange, meaning a dissemination of findings. But this is still not enough. In his book *The Conflict of the Faculties*, Henk Borgdorff adds that, by definition, artistic research needs to be an intended and planned procedure with the objective 'to expand our knowledge and understanding', and that any working process needs to be reflected and documented. And 'the tacit knowledge that is situated and embodied in specific art works and artistic processes' has to be 'articulated' and 'revealed' (Borgdorff 2012, p.53). Accordingly, when submitting research applications, it meanwhile needs stating straight away how the fulfillment of these requirements is to be envisaged. Since I have been in charge of an artistic research project¹ myself I know this only too well. In my opinion, such requirements are really more in the nature of restrictions, thus largely excluding the nature of research in the field of the arts. This exclusion is being executed in favour of the so-called purity of a procedure which has been institutionalising itself, namely: a more 'standardised' management, control and comparability of applications, results and publications for the sake of simplifying the decision-making process concerning applications for funding. Looking at it from a merely factual point of view, this frame appears to be overly rigid and lacking any justified reason.

My preference would be to get rid of the term 'research' if it were necessary to follow all of the mentioned prescriptions. Instead of 'research' I would personally prefer to use the term 'artistic thinking'.² In my opinion, the restructurings all lead to putting too much emphasis on what is rational and intentional. Artistic practices thus tend to become pushed more in the direction of artifice rather than art. They gain a 'busy routine' in this way and become kind of domesticated. Such a 'streamlining' of the process will produce nothing but administered artistic red tape, accompanied by a fruitless legitimisation discourse.

Also, it seems inappropriate to me to have an image of the artist as someone who has a clear-cut awareness of what he or she 'wants to do', and who simply enters a pre-formulated and intentionally preset working process.

¹ *Knowledge through Art*, funded by the Austrian Science Fund; for more information see www.spaciergang.org.

² For a more detailed analysis of artistic thinking see Echzehn/Miklautz (2017).

This picture is in contradiction to a certain ‘unavailability’ which might be innate in the course of the working process. We must not forget that many things in the artistic approach are fed by forces of which the artist is often unaware, and which go beyond the subject of the artist as a person – rather, he or she seems to encounter them in the oeuvre which they have created. Michel Foucault, Maurice Blanchot, and Jacques Rancière have elaborated widely on that. Artistic output bears witness to something ‘which is thought within it’ (Busch 2016, p.169). Going by this, it is not the artist who ‘thinks’, but rather the output he or she has created – it is almost like the work of art, once manifested in this world, expresses a different ‘thought’. This only becomes possible when an uncontrolled opening up to such an experience is a possibility in the first place, and when processes as such are allowed without predefining the outcome. It is therefore necessary to be both driven towards, and to drift in the unknown at the same time. This process cannot be planned in advance and can therefore not be applied for, precalculated or preset as to its methods. It is simply not available before the process itself: rather, it will evolve in the course of it.

In analogy to ‘it is thought within it’, there is also an ‘it is revealed within it’ with reference to a work of art and/or an artistic process, which can equally not be calculated or intellectually anticipated from the beginning. Both the artistic process and the artistic output give evidence of a ‘This is how it is’ (comp. Miklautz 2017). When transferred to a different medium, such as language, it suddenly loses in substance. And this is precisely why I am so sceptical; why I distrust the necessity of the articulation and contextualisation of what is deemed ‘the outcome of the artistic research process’. When one postulates the necessity of the articulation and contextualisation of the outcome, what happens is making it into something conventional, which is totally deprived of its variety in meaning. All discussion which we see now in aesthetic theory regarding the unspeakable and the enigmatic nature of artistic expression together with the failed attempts of translating them into language render testimony of this (see Miklautz 2012).

Following Nelson Goodman, we gain the possibility to distinguish between different forms of symbolising, wherein each of these forms opens up a special range of expressability that is not transferable to one of the others without losing part of its original capacity to symbolise. The differences between saying, showing, and expressing can be grasped as different forms of reference, namely as denotation on the one hand, and as exemplification or expression on the other hand. Exemplifying makes available new labels that broaden and enlarge our way to experience the

world including ourselves. Although these labels are nonverbal, they open up a new cognitive terrain that has so far been unknown. If we try to translate the meaning into words, we lose density and repleteness as well as the capacity of multiple and complex reference.

In as far as the only possibility to communicate the ineffable is to do it ineffably, I am rather sceptical when it comes to the postulated discourse of what should be, and has been, researched. The theoretical reflection of artistic practice does not add anything to it; neither does it allow for any expansion of insight. Its density, abundance, and complex referencing cannot be rendered in words. If the requirement for artistic research truly is 'the *articulation* of the unreflective, non-conceptual content enclosed in aesthetic experiences, enacted in creative practices, and embodied in artistic products' (emphasis E.M.), as Henk Borgdorff (2012, p.168) put it, then it would be better not to be labelled a 'researching artist'.

To illustrate my doubt and to strengthen my argument, let me introduce the example of an artist whose working procedure can, without any doubt, be called research and experimental action even though it does not, strictly speaking, match the requirements of artistic research. I am referring here to William Kentridge, who has said about himself that his performance is always at its best when he does not know what he is doing. He uses stupidity strategically – as a method to gain an importance which lies beyond language and logic. 'I became an artist', he says, 'because I realized I needed to find a field in which the construction of fictional authorities and imagined quotes would be a cause for celebration rather than rustication and disgrace.' (Kentridge 2014, p.14) He sees stupidity as functional and necessary in succeeding with his artistic work, counting on the charm of an insight without knowledge, wishing to free himself of the constraints of 'knowing'.

When working in the studio, Kentridge pursues the goal of 'making a safe space for stupidity ... following the impulses that feel stupid, without a destination ... to allow that which starts as a whim to continue' (Kentridge 2014, p.128). In the process of working, he kind of confronts heterogeneous materials with each other. He improvises and collages, abandoning himself to the interaction of what is randomly accruing. The idea here is to provoke something new which has not been thought of or planned in advance. Kentridge describes it as 'to let making jump ahead of thinking' (Kentridge 2014, p.49). He associates freely and without any focus, thus taking seriously and recombining virtually anything which comes up in his stream of

consciousness, even that which seems totally far fetched. 'Peripheral Thinking' is what he calls this procedure (Kentridge 2017) which entails the suspension both of understanding and reason. According to him, it is 'not in celebration of the stupidity itself, but believing in it more than in a studio of good ideas, of things worked out in advance and then shot and executed' (Kentridge 2014, p.128). So, stupidity in the sense he uses it then means being unprejudiced – a free interplay of imagination rather than a plan-based targeting process, something which creates the space for coincidence to strike. In this way, the outcome is a surprise to himself. At some point, he talks about 'being led by the body, rather than simply the mind ordering the body about' (Kentridge 2014, p.108). To Kentridge, failure is just as valuable a resource as stupidity in that they both open up a space which one would otherwise neither be able to find, nor be able to express. In the *Johannesburg Centre for the Less Good Idea*, he makes available a 'safe space for uncertainty' for the artists where they have the chance 'to learn by failing'.

When following Kentridge's philosophy or goal, it does not appear very fruitful to adjust to the directives of artistic research. Stupidity as a method does not seem to be allowed to be part of it. But to act stupid on purpose is exactly that which creates the space to evade all prefabricated assumption and thinking. In fact, it is a strategy which is also well known from qualitative social research. I therefore plead in favour of the following: not to feel restricted by a standardised and uniform logic of applications, to take seriously failure as a resource, to open up towards coincidence as a creative principle and, to advocate findings that stand for themselves.

Bibliography

- Borgdorff, Henk (2012) *The Conflict of the Faculties. Perspectives on Artistic Research and Academia*. Leiden: Leiden University Press.
- Busch, Kathrin (2016) "Ästhetische Amalgamierung. Zu Kunstformen der Theorie", in: Judith Siegmund (ed.) *Wie verändert sich Kunst, wenn man sie als Forschung versteht?* Bielefeld: transcript.
- Echzehn, Adreis/Miklautz, Elfie (2017) "al niente – a dissolution. Thinking in Images and Sounds", in: Paulo de Assis/Paolo Guidici *The Dark Precursor. Deleuze and Artistic Research*, Vol. II. Leuven: Leuven University Press.
- Frank, Manfred (1989) "Wittgensteins Gang in die Dichtung", in: Manfred Frank, Gianfranco Soldati *Wittgenstein: Literatur und Philosophie*. Pfullingen: Günther Neske.
- Goodman, Nelson (1976) *Languages of Art. An Approach to a Theory of Symbols*. Indianapolis: Hackett.

Kentridge, William (2014) *Six Drawing Lessons*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.

Kentridge, William (2017) *Thick Time. Installationen und Inszenierungen*. München: Hirmer.

Miklautz, Elfie (2012) "aaaaaaaaaaaaa. Musik will uns hören“, in: Christian Grüny (ed.) *Musik und Sprache. Dimensionen eines schwierigen Verhältnisses*. Weilerswist: Velbrück.

Miklautz, Elfie (2017) "Betreten verboten. Auf die Grenze des Sagbaren zeigen“, in: Elfie Miklautz/Wilhelm Berger (ed.) *Neugier. mehr zeigen*. Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1977) *Vermischte Bemerkungen*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

MY MOTHERS DANCING ON MY TONGUE
Stephanie Misa

Abstract

I look at first languages (the “mother tongue”), my own included, and the complication this notion implies in contexts where the mother tongue is a purely spoken language outside of institutional (read-write) frameworks. I use the term “orality” (*aural-ity*), to decipher the growth and agency of a marginalised spoken language. It is with orality as potentiality rather than a written “residue” (as in Walter J. Ong’s *Orality and Literacy*) that I delve into spoken language. I examine the activation of an orality outside usual educational modes of instruction: its evolution, cannibalism, appropriation, and production of pidginised and creole words. Is the pervasiveness of a spoken language, in fact, a form of resistance?

I question power hierarchies implicit in institutionalised languages by putting forward oralities from the margin and their alternative forms of expression whose agency live in embodied forms of articulation. I am arguing that the embodiment of an orality, its containment in a colonised, disenfranchised, diasporic body, is exactly what gives it power, and that alternative forms of oral expression do not have to be regulated into ECTS credits. I see orality as a way to access an intersectionality, one that ruptures the idea of bound cultures, and instead proposes that culture—by extension, language—is in perpetual flux, one that’s marked by creative becomings. But to do this we have to break down and re-digest what constitutes a “mother tongue”—to expel, excrete, replenish—take shape and sing in a tongue blessed by many mothers.

My Mothers Dancing on my Tongue

I would like to concentrate on the words “mother tongue” and how the *single* starting point implied by this term may not hold true anymore for many trans-national, multi-language speaking identities, or even those raised by 2 mothers—if we’re to take the term literally.

And what I am really after—in this proposition—is to pose the question, what is the embodied agency of an orality, of a language that lives only in its oral form, within a community of speakers.

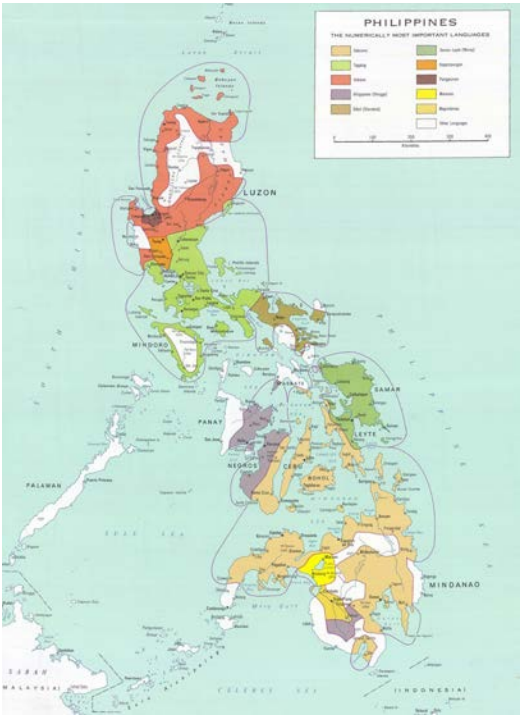
— *I am telling you a story* —

I grew up in Cebu City, a small island in the middle of in the Philippines. My first language is *Bisaya* (or “Cebuano” is another name for it)— that was the language in the video I just played¹ — and the same language the current President of the Philippines, Rodrigo Duterte, speaks.



From “Chismis sa mga Saop ni Diniris” a bisaya *Game of Thrones* parody. Subtitles translate to: “I’m tasked to feed the dragons today”(top), “Oh no, girl” (bottom).

¹ Played excerpts of Scene 1 from “Chismis sa mga Saop ni Diniris”, a youtube channel by Sutukil Sauce (Samantha Solidum and Chai Fonacier). The parody runs on the gossip of Daenerys’ Filipino domestic help as they go about their day. <https://youtu.be/i2FZSqXDeUU>



Map of the different ethnolinguistic groups of the Philippines.

The Philippines, and it might come as a surprise to some, actually has more than seven different languages, spoken across different island regions. *Tagalog* is the language of Southern Luzon, where Manila is located. The Philippines like most countries has centralised and seated its power in Manila, its capital. Tagalog has been made ubiquitous. All our soap operas and noon-time shows and news casts are in Tagalog—essentially, “Filipino” is the term for Tagalog given a more nationalistic bent.

So here we are, lowly-Bisaya speakers, language relegated to social chatter and talk about the weather. Yet, there it is— still alive and well and being spoken by more than a fourth of the Philippines’ vast population (roughly about 100 million and growing)— a country whose land mass is the size of Germany if we put all 7000 islands together. This too might attest to the popularity of Duterte, he speaks the “outsider” language. Visayans feel as if they know him because he speaks Tagalog with the hard grip of the Bisaya tongue— he punctures the language as if he were still speaking his own language and not his un-eloquent version of Filipino. It’s been a big hit.

So the language, this social language— this *un*-nationalistic language Bisaya, it has been given a gift, the gift of unregulated otherness. Because it is not taught in schools, nor is it written or read it, it has no structure to adhere to really and it evolves with each generation that speaks it and quite quickly. The rate of word appropriation and creation is amazing. But this is what it means to have a living language— one that is tied to people rather than structure, it mirrors contemporary concerns in a very visceral way— and is in itself its own contemporaneity. This means perhaps acknowledging that the language of enculturation can come from many different sites, nine months in a mother's womb does not guarantee eloquence in her tongue.

But what of the new immigrants, communities transplanted into other cultures and nations while their home is torn war or economic strife— what happens then when the language that you carry with you is suddenly cut off, and regulated to an orality, or an “aural-ity” (as in the musician's sense of identifying by pitch, inter-vals, cords, rhythm and other elements)— what then is the orality that is produced that sounds out this displacement, where are the fractures that form between the attempt to integrate and keeping to what is known. What is the price of being made incoherent, ineloquent and rendered dumb?

Beautiful papers, poems and countless essays have been written about language: syntax, accent, etymologies, origins, appropriations, stringing together a sentence—but I'm less concerned about the language itself— what interests me does not lay on the phonetics and grammarily use of words, I am more engaged in the body that expresses it, and how it expresses it, especially the body caught in the middle, the body that molds the words and sounds out this in-between-ess—the being that it is caught in the process of assimilation and refusal, and can't quite catch up to the present, because its past is still its present and its future is, but *is*, and can dance with all partners and realises that maybe each utterance is a re-birth and each movement is a becoming and the endless waltz and its one-two-three-one-two-three is the back and forth of remembrance and emergence and a gift, a gift offered by *many* mothers.

FROM VOICE-OF-GOD TO RINGMASTER: LIVE PARTICIPATORY
DOCUMENTARY AND THE IMPERATIVE TO CREATE
REFLEXIVE, COLLABORATIVE, MULTIPERSPECTIVAL
HISTORIES

Kim Nelson

Abstract

Live Participatory Documentary (LPD) is film performance, in two distinct movements, that expresses ARWEI's notion of regurgitation. It is a collaborative expanded cinema mashup, informed by concepts from philosophy and remix culture. This paper will introduce and explain this mode, and how it is informed by, and enacts, philosophical notions of reflexivity, multiperspectivity and collaboration.

The totalising grip of the internet and streaming on the one hand, and the collapse of true independent and low budget filmmaking on the other, invites a re-engagement of the local, retaking the foreclosed grounds of the movie theatre, inviting *real people* to emerge whole from their refracted online identities. Inspired by the earliest days of cinema, LPD revisits and reinterprets approaches to film from the brief time before commercial interest had wrung audience-participants from the program in favour of moulding an inert disembodied consumer-spectator.

Live Participatory Documentary (LPD)

Other than a mouthful of syllables, Live Participatory Documentary, or LPD, is film performance in two discrete parts: a spectacle in which the narrator delivers the film's argument on stage, followed by an invitation to the audience to probe and question the narrative, while the film's composer, editor and narrator, respond with sounds, images and words. Unlike the invisible tailors of traditional films, with LPD, the film's makers materialize in the room, live-mixing the audio and visuals in a shared space with the audience.

Part 1 in the show is a deconstructed documentary, with narrative-based documentary clips that feature interviews and unfurling linear plots, projected alongside live narration; then the lights rise slightly. In Part 2, the spectators become spectator-participants, invited to speak. They question, comment upon, and prod, the documentary/history/historical argument that they have just experienced, and build an improvised, multiperspectival, multimedia history. The narrator, composer, and editor respond directly to the audience, in the moment, speaking into their microphones while new media software applications, designed for dance clubs, VJing and installation work, such as *Max* and *Isadora*, allow for the instantaneous selection of experimental video, archival images, and interviews

- all at the editor's fingertips. The inspiration for this concept is to create a group mixed documentary, outside of YouTube's celebrity-soaked, pop culture supercuts. Humans retake the role of the algorithm, transforming interactive media from a solitary, onanistic exercise comprised of binary, pre-programmed options, to a real, social space where comments and reactions are spontaneous and infinite. The concept springs from two imperatives: 1) to respond to the critiques of history on film levelled by historians, philosophers and cultural theorists, with a practice-based answer that imbeds multiple perspectives into the form, and 2) to counter the alienating effects of streaming and screen culture. Merging the live, human elements of lecture-performance with documentary film is one way to inject the context, perspective and humanity that is required to get at what 'truth' really is: something debatable and contested but real, and linked to experience in the past.



1. Images of LPD: *130 Year Road Trip* explores the influence of Canadian settlement policies in the 1880s on German views of their Eastern borderlands, and later Nazi ideology. The narrator/historian and director/editor are before the screen. Photos: Syjetlana Oppen

Then

Live Documentary and Lecture-Performance call back to a third path, mostly abandoned by cinema. When film began it was not immediately apparent what it was. Was it an intimate single viewer experience or a projected communal spectacle? The Sklandowsky and Lumière brothers' approach forms a fairly straight line to theatrical experiences, from specialty arthouse theatres, to the cineplex and IMAX. Whereas, the single viewer model, the Kinescope, receded from favour, only to reemerge with vigour, reincarnated in small screen, solitary viewing experiences provided by smartphones and tablets. Live Documentary's roots harken back to precinematic pairings of lectures, 'dramatic readings,' and travelogues from the days of the magic lantern, when 'scientific and educational lantern lectures supplied the nineteenth-century equivalent of the Power Point presentation.' (Gunning, 2008, p.10) The lecturer-audience-screen model, lasted

into the early days of film, producing a specific 'spectatorial involvement.' (Gunning, 2006, p. 37) Before cinema found its mainstream way of making, telling, selling and exhibiting, its methods were more varied, producing different kinds of films and different experiences for spectators. (Musser, 2008, p.160) When films first appeared on the scene, however, before they were edited into multireel spectacles that accommodated a full evening's entertainment, they were incorporated into pre-existing understandings of the theatrical, often presented alongside other entertainments, including vaudeville. (Gunning, 1986, p.66)

Exploring the earliest years of cinema, Charles Musser explains that films were 'merely raw material for the exhibitor's programs' and thus the actual choices in exhibition were made locally. All of this variety led to a range of spectator experiences, including programs that roused 'astonishment,' 'contemplation,' and 'discernment,' before the eventual triumph of narrative cinema. (Musser, 2008, p.160)

Now

In the Wachowski's *The Matrix*, (1999) humans are unwittingly forced from their lived experience, to curl up tightly into gelatinous pods in order to be used as battery power. It was not as recognizable at the turn of the century, but in retrospect it has begun to seem like prophecy, almost. Except that we would not be kidnapped into our pods, but we would go there voluntarily, retreating to personal screens, hooked up to internet shopping transactions, creating Amazon.com as overlord¹, transferring wealth over websites. The 45th US President and Christopher Wiley confirm what we already knew: that A) celebrity culture has run amok, and B) there is something rotten at the very foundation of social media interaction. Our current state of media consumption is isolating and dislocating. It trumpets participation and voice, while delivering pseudo-participation and multiple choice options by algorithm.

At the European Network for Cinema and Media Studies (NECS) conference in Potsdam, Germany in 2016, Sean Cubitt delivered a captivating keynote, available to read at academica.edu. In it, Cubitt questions the optimism incumbent in the conference's title and theme: 'in/between: cultures of connectivity,' in a talk entitled 'Against Culture.' (2016) Cubitt zeroes in on the shift from the radical and utopian intentions that shaped the early days of 'the network,' lamenting that what has emerged is 'connectivity against culture,' (2016, p.5) a site of 'profound, even existential unhappiness,' (2016, p.1). In the place of culture, Cubitt laments, we now have 'a marketplace of lifestyles' (2016, p.5) dependent upon 'the interactions of a corporate network ... structured by the commodification of the social good.' (2016, p.10) For Cubitt, the word 'connection' has been appropriated to mean something it is not. Network connection is disconnection really, a 'fantasy of belonging' that is thus quite destructive. (2016, p.10) Cubitt's appraisal of the network seems prescient in the context of the socio-political upheavals that would surface later that year, and that

¹ I am complicit in this.

² For more information on prolific documentarian and live documentary filmmaking pioneer Sam Green, see his website: samgreen.to

have continued to crack and expose the scope of the threats within the virtual environments where so many spend so much time.

Intergenerational crystalball gazer Guy Debord and his *Society of the Spectacle* is absolutely mesmerizing to reread now. It seems impossible to fathom that Debord was writing in 1967, and not in response to the ills of Facebook, social media and our retrenchment from culture into our increasingly unaffordable Matrix-sized pods. To wit:

An earlier stage in the economy's domination of social life entailed an obvious downgrading of *being* into *having* that left its stamp on all of human endeavour. The present stage, in which social life is completely taken over by the accumulated products of the economy, entails a generalised shift from *having* to appearing... (1967, p.16)

It is hard to even conceive what that looked like in the 1960s, when it seems to be speaking directly to the shallowness of our App-based capitulation to capital and identity curation through product associations, travel, good hair days and food porn.

History and Documentary: brothers from another mother

In his landmark text *Representing Reality*, documentary film scholar Bill Nichols established documentary as a kind of history. (1991, p.x) For Nichols, documentary and history are both 'discourses of sobriety,' (1991, p.3) inextricably connected to each other. Like text-based histories, documentaries mine evidence from the past to create an argument and a narrative, sewing meaning together in the present. If we accept that documentary is a form of history: a construction that makes an argument, tells a story, and makes claims about the past, then it also makes sense that documentary practice benefits from acknowledging debates within the philosophy of history about what history actually is, what it does, and what it ought to do.

History was first institutionalized within academia in Berlin, in 1810, and initially pursued as a kind of science. (Iggers, 2005, pp.18-24) Within the next 100 years, Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche and Benedetto Croce would weigh in on the philosophical implications of historicizing, including what its parameters are, how it functions, and whether or not it is even useful for anything. Nietzsche and Croce were not convinced. (White, 1973, pp.348-353; 394) The reservations and questions they raise continue to be relevant to history, whether it is written, spoken or depicted. These questions ought to be considered by those who construct history, and to inform new methods. There is little doubt that the reservations put forward by Marx, Nietzsche, Croce, et al., contributed to the cultural shift, if not collision, that pushed art, culture and thought, from modernism to postmodernism. As the authority of the genius artist was thrown into question, so too was that of the intellectual and the historian.

Along with genius, and Nietzsche's God, 'truth' combusted. Understanding what truth actually means in practice is the work of any good intellectual in the

scientific age. The answer is not straightforward, not black or white. The dangers of relativism have been called out within the philosophical arena by postmodernism's critics and true believers alike, such as Saul Friedlander, whose *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the Final Solution*, sites the perils of extreme relativism about facts and truth, as servicing Holocaust deniers. (1992) Bruno Latour, philosophical titan of scientific relativism, pulled back in horror during the W. Bush era, as he saw the 'tools of critique' that he had himself championed, being used, ju jitsu style by nefarious politicians and spin doctors, such as (the aptly named) Frank Luntz. In his essay *Has Critique Run out of Steam*, Latour notes a Republican communiqué from Luntz that states that as a final recourse to denying the impacts of climate change, one should invoke the philosophy of science's inner knowledge that 'proof,' and incontrovertible 'truth,' simply do not exist. (2004, p.226) Here, Latour sees an argument that he contributed to, being employed in a way that threatens our very existence. (2004, p.227) While the Enlightenment was powered by '...*debunking* quite a lot of beliefs, powers and illusions,' (2004, p.232) he sees the future for critique in 'assembling,' (2004, p.246) through probing areas of concern and by '*gathering*.' (2004, p.245)



2. Historicising spectator-participants in Part 2. LPD at the *Pluralities* Conference at San Francisco State University, 2017. Photo: Sjetlana Oppen

LPD seeks to gather, assemble and treat truth with the consideration it requires. Truth is not something to be proven or denied, but explored, ideally with others, as Latour requests, not as 'matters of fact' but as 'matters of concern.' (2004, p.231) This is the stage that LPD seeks to set.

Audience Member/Spectator/Participant/Collaborator

LPD invites spectators to question, comment upon, or critique the history documentary, revealing the processes of historicity, (that is the '*making of history*' in the *telling*, as opposed to the *doing*). It engages audience members in the production of history, which always involves imagining and creating. (White, 1966; 1973)

Staging editing as part of the performance is a way to engage the editing suite as shared, performed and displayed, allowing individuals to collaborate on, or watch, the construction of a documentary history. This is a practical and performative response to Robert Berkhofer's suggestion that history must communicate 'multiple viewpoints,' producing a 'polyvocality.' (1997, p.197) The goal is to create a space akin to what Andreas Huyssens advises for museums, 'sites of cultural contestation and negotiation.' 1995, p.35) When audience members have the chance to speak in LPD, in Part 2, debates over the interpretation of the history presented in Part 1, can and do erupt.



3. Screenshot from spontaneous *Max* mix in Part 2 of LPD: *130 Year Road Trip*. Using *Max* software, documentary footage of the historian in the archive meets an archival photo of a Blackfoot warrior from Saskatchewan, 1878. Visuals, including colour, manipulated by editor, in real time during performance. Image: Kim Nelson.

My interest in reengaging and reinterpreting precinematic forms includes the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Postmodern interpretations aim to show the seams, however, and stage 'a radical *separation of the elements*' as Brecht advises. (1957, p.37). In traditional film, as in the *Gesamtkunstwerk* opera, there is 'muddle' of 'integration' whereupon the arts are 'fused' together, and as a result 'the various elements [are] equally degraded.' (Brecht, 1957, p.37) By making the artists behind an artwork visible, as Brecht did in placing the musicians on the stage in *The Threepenny Opera* in 1928, the audience's relation to the work is changed. (Brecht, 1957, p.85) In describing the '*Paedagogics*' of Epic Theatre, Brecht claims that 'only a new purpose can lead to a new art.' (1957, p.31) He further describes similar processes to LPD in which '...the participant listens to the part and speaks the other. In this way a collaboration develops...' (1957, p.31) Whereas Brecht's intention is to inform and incite the audience to act, LPD's more modest hope is to inform and mobilize the audience to think critically about history and its processes.

We may be getting slightly agoraphobic as a culture but, of course, we are not truly *Matrix*-style passive. In *The Emancipated Spectator*, Jacques Rancière begins by invoking Brecht's mission that:

What is called for is a theatre without spectators, where those in attendance learn from as opposed to being seduced by images; where they become active participants as opposed to passive voyeurs. (2011, p.4)

For Rancière, however, traditional spectatorship is not passive. Indeed, when we watch, we are in continual conversation with ourselves, our own memories, mulling potential actions to take in the future, laying our narratives over those on display and vice versa. One need not stand up, or speak out, to be active; regardless, the spectator 'observes, selects, compares, interprets.' (2011, p.13) I agree that while sitting and watching, silent and unmoving, the spectator is actively engaged. Even while in the kind of hypnotised state that Roland Barthes describes as part of his movie going experience, (1986, p.345) it is an enchantment, but it does not bypass thought. (Barthes then leaves the movie theatre, wishing not to talk about the film, much less during the film and to the filmmakers). (1986, pp.345-348) And thus, the imperative to encourage audience members to speak in LPD is not motivated by making the spectator active, they are already. It does aim to activate a different way of thinking, and of being an audience member. LPD provides a place to congregate. It is a break from our spatiotemporal dislocations, our virtual echo chambers, our needy, noisy, mobile Kinetoscopes. LPD incites collaborative participation to animate the processes of *historicizing*, *narrativizing* and the *telling of 'truth,'* in order to see more clearly what those things actually are.



4. Active minds from LPD, Part 1 at *Pluralities*. Photo: Svjetlana Oppen

Screens and Humans – Co-exist?
Post-Script from Plymouth and SAR 2018

I come from film. Straight up: shoot-edit-walk away, film. While understanding and partaking in the delights, pleasures and erudition of films via cinema, festival and streaming screens, I have come to think that there must be another way to *be* with moving images as audiences. One that engages, as ideas, notions of 'truth' and 'fact,' as they become increasingly contested, and abused terms. I see this happening in the burgeoning field within film dubbed 'live documentary' as exemplified in the oeuvre of documentary filmmaker Sam Green, a documentarian who has taken his staged, deconstructed documentaries to venues like the Sundance Film Festival, Hot Docs (Toronto), and BAM (New York).² But mainstream filmmakers are really late to the party that art film and performance artists have forged via lecture-performance. This was evidenced by many of the stellar keynotes and sessions I attended at the Society for Artistic Research's 9th International Conference, *Artistic Research Will Eat Itself*, including Alex Murray-Leslie's *Ready to Foot: decolonising the feet through Demaking High Heeled shoes for audiovisual theatrical performance and a new location of knowledge*, a rollicking and engaging lecture-performance that included rock n'roll theatricality and video; Emily Huurdeman's *art and science in potentia: essaying as an approach to artistic research*, a calm, reflective and reflexive multiscreen mediation on the etymology and history of the essay; and culminating in Ayesha Hameed's *Black Atlantis: Retrograde Futurism*, a compelling and arresting lecture-performance that combined Hameed's assured, gentle narration from a starkly lit lectern, alongside audio clips, text and video imagery that tilted well into the feel of a film going experience and the territory of live documentary.

I am not sure which descriptor is more apt at getting at what I want to talk about: live documentary applies to Hameed's work but does not precisely describe what Murray-Leslie and Huurdeman are so skilfully doing. And yet they belong to this web of what could be shot-edited-screened but are so much more effectively relayed through face-to-face performance - followed by Q&A. And yet, I am not convinced about the term lecture-performance, as the word lecture conjures bored teenagers rolling their eyes skyward. Learning's reputation has not changed much since Brecht's lamenting the pejorative associations of 'learning' in bourgeois society. (1957, pp.60-1) And yet, the collision of a word that telegraphs time-stopping ennui with the word 'performance,' which conveys excitement, liveness and boundless possibility, just may work as an oxymoron, a paradox that creates interest in the intersection of polar expectations.

Although I am not sure what it should be called, I know it ought to be called something. And it should be something that reaches from the art world to cinema, as an alternative way for spectators to exist in the world, *really in the world*, not like so many dreamers and streamers, isolated at home. If, as Brecht says, new art can only come from new goals, our new purpose may be to assemble, both in Latour's terms of building something instead of tearing it down, and in his sense of gathering together.

² For more information on prolific documentarian and live documentary filmmaking pioneer Sam Green, see his website: samgreen.to

Bibliography

Barthes, R. (1986) Leaving the Movie Theatre. *The Rustle of Language*. Translated by Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang. 345-349.

Berkhofer Jr., R.F. (1997). *Beyond the Great Story: History as Text and Discourse*. Boston: Belknap Press.

Brecht, B. (1957) Translated by John Willett, ed. *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*. Reprint 1992. New York: Hill and Wang.

Cubitt, S. (2016). "Against Connectivity." Keynote at NECS European Network for Cinema and Media Studies 2016 Conference in/between: cultures of connectivity: Potsdam, Germany, July 28–30 2016. [online] Available at: <https://www.academia.edu/27430246/Against_Connectivity> [Accessed 10 April 2018].

Dubord, G. (1967). *The Society of the Spectacle*. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. Reprint 1995. New York: Zone Books.

Friedlander, S. (1992) *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the Final Solution*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Gunning, T. (1986) The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde. *Wide Angle* 8.3. pp.63-77

Gunning, T. (2006) Attractions: How They Came into the World. In Wanda Straven ed. *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Gunning, T. (2008) "Early Cinema and the Variety of Moving Images." *American Art*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2008, pp. 9–11.<www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/591163> [Accessed 23 August 2016].

Huyssen, A. (1995) *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*. New York: Routledge.

Iggers, G. (2005) *Historiography in the Twentieth Century from Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.

Latour, B. (2004) Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern. *Critical Inquiry*. 30. University of Chicago.

The Matrix. (1999). [film] Directed by Lana and Lilly Wachowski. USA: Warner Bros.

Musser, C. (2006) A Cinema of Contemplation, A Cinema of Discernment: Spectatorship, Intertextuality and Attractions in the 1890s. In Wanda Straven ed. *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press. 159-79.

Nichols, B. (1991) *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991.

Ranci re, J. (2011) *The Emancipated Spectator*. London: Verso.

White, H.. (1966) The Burden of History. *History and Theory* 5(2). Wesleyan University, Wiley. <www.jstor.org/stable/2504510> [Accessed 12 January 2016].

White, H. (1973) *Metahistory: Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press.

MANIFESTO FOR THE MULTIVOCAL VOICE: PRINCIPLES FOR A PERFORMANCE VOICE IN THE VOCAL ARTS (ABRIDGED VERSION)

Alex Nowitz

Abstract

The lecture-performance *A Manifesto For The Multivocal Voice* (30 minutes) is a performative presentation that explores the principles of a performance voice in vocal arts today. The presentation as lecture-performance, at the 9th SAR, took place verbally (words) and vocally (sounds) issued by one person being both the author and the vocal performer. Encompassing speaking and singing as well as extended and disembodied voices, the presenter's voice itself becomes the subject of investigation. The live presentation therefore is an exposition of self-reflection with the means of various different vocal art practices. The aim of the paper, as well as of its preceding live presentation, is to unfold the connections between artistic intentions and socio-cultural impacts, to elucidate the crossings between the trajectories of extended vocal practices, on the one hand, and philosophical outreach of an expanded field of artistic vocality on the other. The paper refers to video documentaries ranging from vocal live performances with and without live electronics to an outdoor event during which the performer *whistles to and with* birds. The actual result of the extended voice may sound exuberant, excessive, even monstrous. But this paper attempts to illuminate an aesthetics of vocal diversity countersigned by a philosophical approach to mapping the contemporary performance voice and its potentialities.

Introduction

Due to the lack of a concise and plausible term to outline the theoretical foundation for vocal art performance today, I devised the notion of the *multivocal voice*.¹ Even though applied in a rather generic sense, with regard to the field of vocal arts, it derives from my experiences, discoveries, developments and findings that I have been coming across by learning and performing as vocal artist on various different stages over the period of three decades.

¹ The *Manifesto for the Multivocal Voice* is influenced by a number of artists that I value highly, composer-performers such as Michael Edward Edgerton, Joan La Barbara, Meredith Monk, Trevor Wishart, interpreters such as Nicholas Isherwood, Ariane Jessulat, Salome Kammer, as well as those from Auditivvokal Dresden or Maulwerker Berlin, and vocal performers such as Tomomi Adachi, Jaap Blonk, Phil Minton, Mark van Tongeren, Ute Wassermann, and many others. Special thanks go to pianist/vocal performer Sten Sandell and, above all, to experimental prose writer Rolf Hughes who tirelessly supported the writing process and cleaned up my *English*.

As both producer and recipient, we need to understand the foundations of vocal art performance as well as its impacts. What are the premises? What form of expression is included and what is excluded? Is there a philosophical ground that vocal art performance is built on? What are the intentions of the respective vocal aesthetics? In order to frame the reference points on a generic level and to map the realm of vocal artistry towards a critical and expanded field of artistic research, I've chosen the form of the *manifesto*² which, precisely because of its non-linear character, permits the curating of provocative claims, confrontational intentions and sometimes maybe exaggerated views, all of which help shape a notion of *multivocality*.

Regarding artistic research, it needs to be noted that, even today, it is a highly debated, controversial field that still seems to be entangled in the objective/subjective dilemma.³ Owing to these circumstances, the Barthesian approach to research, the question of 'what is missing?',⁴ still provides a productive and suitable guideline to frame the reference points and, by doing so, to map the field.

In its written form, the *Manifesto for the Multivocal Voice* ⁵ has a wide-ranging footnote section aiming to create a platform that pokes the natural sciences with regard to physiological aspects of vocal experiments, but also to foster the discussion toward the realm of the humanities currently 'undergoing a vocal turn' as American philosopher and electronic musician Brian Kane refers to.⁶ All in all, the aim of the manifesto is to open up the field of contemporary vocal arts towards a thinking in and through the voice — something we all are both extremely familiar with and, at the same time, alien to.

² Antonin Artaud's seminal work 'The Theatre of Cruelty: First Manifesto' was a great source of inspiration in regards to the notion of *vocal extension*. He asks to search for new pathways in treating speech and voice: 'Abandoning our Western ideas of speech, it turns words into incantation. It expands the voice. It uses vocal vibrations and qualities, wildly trampling them underfoot. It piledrives sounds. It aims to exalt, to numb, to bewitch, to arrest our sensibility' (Artaud, p. 64).

³ According to German philosopher Dieter Mersch who, in the chapter 'Artistic Research' (pp. 24 - 44) of his book *Epistemologies of Aesthetics*, elucidates that science has gone into opposition to the arts. 'The historical differentiation between art and science [...] goes back to the rationalism of the eighteenth century and its ideal of objectivity. Only then did science begin to assert itself in opposition to artistic practice, which was degraded as *subjective*. During the Middle Ages, *ars* was considered the height of *scientia*, so that the two were intersecting — not competing — forms of knowledge' (Mersch, *Epistemologies of Aesthetics*, pp. 30 - 31).

⁴ See essay 'Writers, Intellectuals, Teachers' (Barthes, pp. 197 - 98).

⁵ The paper is a distilled version of my 17 page *Manifesto for the Multivocal Voice: On Principles and Perspectives for a Performance Voice in the Vocal Arts*. The original version written in German is titled *Manifest für die vielstimmige Stimme: Zu Prinzipien und Perspektiven einer Vokalkunststimme*.

⁶ See Kane, pp. 91 - 112.

If you celebrate it, it's art: if you don't, it isn't.
John Cage⁷

Manifesto for the Multivocal Voice

This text would rather be performed than read.

The term *multivocal voice* (*vieltimmige Stimme*)⁸ outlines a concept that has been ripped from my vocal art practice yet remains at its core.

As both illustration of the preceding and sonic anticipation of the following paragraph, I suggest to listen to and watch the video documentary of a short composition for voice solo called [Panache](#).⁹

The concept of the multivocal voice represents a range of expressions within contemporary vocal arts – a multitude of voices, all of which can be produced either *by* or *with* one singular voice. *By* indicates a voice as the sole source of sound (as the example of *Panache* aims to demonstrate). *With*, on the other hand, points to the aspect that the voice is used as sound material, but is multiplied through the application of technological means. In order to define the notion of the *extended voice*, we ought to differentiate two ways of how it can show itself. Firstly, it's the application of those techniques that expand the field of vocal artistry by going beyond the Western cultural norm of the operatic voice. These practices have come to be called *extended vocal techniques*.¹⁰ Secondly, the voice might as well be *extended* by the application of technological means, such as live electronics allowing the alteration and manipulation of vocal material. Certainly, all kinds of mixed forms between the two categories of an extended voice are

⁷ This is what John Cage answered while entering a restaurant after being asked by music journalist and critic Heinz-Klaus Metzger about the difference between an ordinary way of opening a door and doing so as an artistic action (Riehn, p. 97).

⁸ See the definition of *multivocal* in the Merriam-Webster dictionary: 1. signifying many things; of manifold meanings; equivocal; S.T.Coleridge: 'meet with an ambiguous or multivocal word' 2.[multi- + vocal] vociferous. F.L.Paxson: 'so bustling and multivocal in pacifism'; S.H.Adams: 'scandals and horrors of the moment in multivocal ... clamor', in <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/multivocal> [Last accessed 29 April 2018].

⁹ See <https://vimeo.com/168750034> [Last accessed 27 April 2018].

¹⁰ As one of many results of the highly politicised period of the sixties and seventies in the 20th century, the term *extended vocal techniques* has been coined in order to differentiate them from the Western norm of the bourgeois opera that had its peak in the 19th century. Nevertheless, extended vocal techniques were applied much earlier. Arnold Schönberg's *Sprechgesang*, as introduced by the composition *Pierrot Lunaire* premiered 2012, might be regarded as one of those starting points. In regards to the history of vocal extended techniques, the collaborations of seminal vocal performer Cathy Berberian with Luciano Berio and John Cage, dating back to the fifties, have become very influential. If we then, in contrast, also take into account those vocal techniques that are applied in non-Western cultures by calling them *extended*, a Euro-centric, post-colonial issue emerges, since the techniques used in the respective cultures are inherent in the approach to vocal expression, whereas the Western model, for them, has by no means any relevance. Therefore the term *extended vocal techniques* has gained an anachronistic and problematic overtone that I prefer to avoid. However, I still use it in this case due to the lack of a better word and the fact that it has become an established term in the context of Western culture, known by a broader audience to denote the vast field of vocal practices beyond the norm. But it's worth noting that exactly the implications of an imprecise terminology have become one out of many motivations for me to propose the notion of the *multivocal voice*.

possible as well. Serving as an example for both categories, I propose to listen to and watch the video documentary of *Playing with Panache*,¹¹ a composition for voice solo and live electronics (*strophonion*).¹²

During the performance, the multivocal voice refers incessantly to the origin, posing the question: where do I come from? At the same time, it constantly raises the flag of destiny (*Bestimmung*), asking: where do I go to?

The multivocal voice shows responsibility not for one but many voices. It creates many orbits and is therefore multi-atmospheric.¹³

The voice contains a certain momentum that sets another person into motion. The motion (*Bewegung*), triggered by the voice, can take place purely on the inside, for instance in the form of an emotional activation (*Bewegtheit*) leading to a specific mood and atmosphere. Or, on the contrary, the condition of being moved comes to the fore, on the outside, through the play of diverse facial and gestural expressions. Even the whole body can be affected – through the expression of bodily movements or even dance. The voice touches the other by producing and sending out sound waves that set into vibration not only the ear drum but the whole auditory apparatus of the other person.¹⁴ The voice in general and, particularly, the multivocal version sends and receives uninterruptedly. What adheres to it, is the instant, the blink of the eye (*Augenblick*) and the certainty of the oncoming (*das Entgegenkommende*).¹⁵ It emerges in the moment and exists through

¹¹ See <https://vimeo.com/187540317> [Last accessed 27 May 2018].

¹² For more information on the strophonion see the online article *Designing and Playing the Strophonion: Extending vocal art performance using a custom digital musical instrument*, retrievable at https://econtact.ca/18_3/nowitz_strophonion.html [Last accessed 27 April 2018].

¹³ From Greek *atmos* meaning *vapour* and *sphaera* meaning *zone, sphere* or *ball*.

¹⁴ French otorhinolaryngologist (usually better known as ear, nose, throat doctor), Alfred A. Tomatis, was specialised in the treatment of singers, researched and disclosed the complex interplay of physiological and psychoacoustic processes that take place during the act of singing. 'The listening faculty requires optimal hearing to control the whole ear, both vestibule and cochlea. [...] The vestibule produces an enormous flow of stimuli, feeding the cerebral cortex with information received through its connections to the muscles and joints and to its action over the entire skeleton. When it is functioning well the cochlea also adds important stimulation central to listening. [...] So it makes sense when someone doesn't want to listen he may turn his back or step aside, so that he presents the parts of his body that has fewer sound receptors. [...] When one person speaks to another, the listener is made to experience the same proprioceptive sensations as the speaker and frequently the listener models his body posture on that of the speaker. When the listener resonates in his body, his posture and his verticality are affected and he opens himself up to receive the speaker's words. The entire peripheral nervous system, both afferent and efferent, galvanizes. The information it sends sparks sensory responses towards the central nervous system, and involves the whole organism, including the cerebral cortex itself. The cochlea stimulates virtually the entire brain, while the vestibule controls the rest of the motor and sensory nervous system. In order to listen, the cochlea must summon the vestibule to position the body so it can receive the maximum amount of stimulation through postural responses, including the energy supplied by resistance to gravity and the presentation of sound receptors in the skin on the front of the body, etc.' (Tomatis, pp. 83-84). Furthermore, Tomatis points toward the transmission of sound through bones: 'In singing posture, the larynx sends resonance to the bones that touch it. The spinal column then sets all structures that touch it into resonance. Once the bones begin to sing, they cause the cavities to vibrate. The voice becomes vibrant, and more harmonious. It is the resonance emanating from every bone in the body that causes this change' (Ibid., p. 89).

¹⁵ Compare Mersch, *Ereignis und Aura*, p. 142.

what comes. The latter can be understood in two ways – either as an oncoming vocal sound material or as a reaction of the recipient, who interacts within the process of vocal production. The recipient is at no time part of an inert mass but always a co-player.¹⁶

A multivocal voice performance is an audibly and visibly becoming ‘setting-itself-to-work of truth’, to use an expression by Martin Heidegger.¹⁷ In concrete terms, it is a *vocal truth* that sets itself into the work. During the performance, the multivocal voice artist immediately puts the voice into the work; that is to say, within the performance, the multivocal voice directly produces a work and exhibits it at the same time. In a best case scenario, it isn’t the carrier of the multivocal voice who does something, but *the voice itself alone*. Because, when the voice becomes an *it* by saying *it sings in us and outward from us* or *it performs without our input just as by itself*, that’s when we have reached that level on which the voice is threefold: *material*, *production tool* and *work* at the same time. This *it*-status is, for the multivocal voice performer, highly desirable.

As opposed to its subsequent interpretation, which is a secondary creation (*Sekundärschöpfung*), the immediate primary creation (*Primärschöpfung*) in and out of the instant skips the compositional process in the traditional understanding of involving an additional artist. The multivocal voice artist therefore can be both composer and performer in union — a *composer-performer*. The performance act is then also an *instant composing* procedure as long as the performer decides not to produce a score in advance in order to enact it during the performance situation. The performance, executed by a composer-performer, therefore is a composition in *real-time*¹⁸. And the composition consists of a performance with compositional

¹⁶ During the live presentation of the *Manifesto of the Multivocal Voice* at the 9th SAR International Conference On Artistic Research in Plymouth, the English translation of the original was presented by slides while I read the paragraph in German: ‘Die Stimme im Allgemeinen trägt ein Moment in sich, das den Gegenüber, also den Anderen, in Bewegung setzt. Die von der Stimme ausgelöste Bewegung kann sich rein innerlich vollziehen, etwa in Form einer emotionalen Bewegtheit, die zu einer bestimmten Stimmung führt. Oder aber die Bewegtheit drückt sich äußerlich in diverser Mimen- und Gestenspiel aus. Sogar der ganze Körper kann betroffen sein, was sich im Ausdruck des Tanzes zeigen kann. Tatsache ist, dass die Stimme den Anderen berührt, und zwar dadurch, dass sie Schallwellen erzeugt und aussendet, die das Trommelfell und den gesamten Hörapparat des Gegenübers in Schwingung versetzt. Die Stimme und die vielstimmige in besonderem Maße sendet und empfängt ununterbrochen. Das, was an ihr haftet, ist einzig der Augenblick (blink of the eye) und die Gewissheit des Entgegenkommenden. Sie entsteht im Moment und existiert durch das, was kommt. Letzteres kann in zweifacher Weise verstanden werden, entweder als kommendes Stimmklangmaterial oder als Reaktion des Empfängers, der beeinflusst auf den Stimmproduktionsvorgang einwirkt. Der Empfänger ist nie Teil einer trägen Masse, sondern immer auch Mitspieler’ (Nowitz, unpublished).

¹⁷ ‘Art is the setting-itself-to-work of truth’ (Heidegger, p. 49). Also, ‘one essential way in which truth establishes itself in the beings it has opened up is its setting-itself-into-the-work’ (Ibid., p. 37).

¹⁸ The word *real-time* is borrowed from computer science describing real-time computing systems as being responsive within a specified time range. In the context of music transmission a latency of between 6 and 20 milliseconds is considered to be tolerable. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Real-time_computing (Last accessed 28 April 2018). Also, note that *real-time* in combination with *composition* or *music* can have a slightly different meaning: *real* in the sense of *authentic*. Since the nineties of the 20th century, in Berlin, the term *real-time composition* has been used, even the music was improvised, in order to indicate a difference to the notion of *improvisation* that has its roots in Jazz and Free-Jazz music. The German equivalent term of real-time music, *Echtzeitmusik*, puts emphasis on the authentic quality of music performed in the moment. The term *Echtzeitmusik* has been coined by a group of young musicians

layers, in case of a solo presentation, comprising voice and body. If the performer then adds novel technology-driven devices such as gesture-controlled live electronics, s/he gains three compositional layers to deal with: the voice, the body and the instrument. In this way, the notion of the *multivocal voice* can also be understood as a *polyphonic performance voice* that, with regard to the application of electronics on the one hand, and of artifices concerning advanced vocal techniques, such as *multiphonics*, on the other, allows the splitting up (*Aufspaltung*) into further voices and diverse voice proportions. As an example for the three-layered performance practice involving voice, body and technology, that I propose to call *voice-induced sound dance*, I suggest to see the video documentary of [Untitled](#),¹⁹ a composition for voice, strophonion and a chair to be ignored.

One basic prerequisite for attaining a multivocal voice is to sharpen its control mechanisms, that is to say its cybernetics²⁰ – perception at all levels, but first and foremost at the auditory level.²¹ For the ears, together with brain, lungs, pharynx, mouth cavity and *mouth tools* (*Mundwerkzeuge*), as I call the components of tongue, soft and hard palate, lower and upper lip, and eventually with the vocal apparatus itself, hence that flexible suspension system which comprises an interweaving of muscles, fasciae, and cartilages which catch, dandle and embed the vocal folds, they all form a mutually dependant and influencing, complex feedback loop, within which all protagonists of the entirety of the vocal body (*Stimmkörper*)²² are both attentive and involved in constant interplay with each other.²³

(at that time) which I was part of, performing in various ensembles, such as the trio *No Doctor* together with Nicholas Bussmann and Hanno Leichtmann or Tony Buck's *Astro-Peril*, all of which performed at newly found venues in East Berlin such as the Anorak or Lychi 60 (now called Ausland). 'The introduction of the term *Echtzeitmusik* reflected an attempt to distinguish itself from Berlin free improvisation and free jazz circles, which were identified with FMP and the Total Music Meeting festival. Although connections were present in the beginning, when for example the ensemble Butch Morris Berlin Skyscraper at the Total Music Meeting in 1995 featured a number of musicians from Anorak, the generational gap seemed too great and the aesthetics and musical goals too different' (Blažanović, pp. 29-52, p. 39). To gain further insights into the author's involvement in the Berlin *Echtzeitmusik* community, see also footnote 15 on p. 50 as well as the photo documentations on p. 56 and p. 107.

¹⁹ See <https://vimeo.com/187541243> [Last accessed 27 April 2018].

²⁰ 'Cybernetics is the science of the mechanisms of control. Although this claims to be a new science, it is based on principles as old as time. Plato touches on these laws in his writings about government. They are as impossible to transgress as they are timeless. In cybernetic terms, a system is regulated when its functioning is subject to a control. Each organ of the human body controls a specific function' (Tomatis, p. 65).

²¹ 'There is nothing complicated about singing. Every sound that a singer makes follows rules that are controlled by the listening function' (Ibid., p. 65).

²² The English and literal translation of *Stimmkörper* is 'voice body' or 'vocal body' and denotes the entirety of the voice in the body, thus all essential parts of the vocal apparatus, i.e. lungs (breath), larynx (vocal production), pharynx (amplification tube), tongue, palate, teeth and lips (all of which are shaping timbre and the final sound). Therefore, the term belongs to the realm of physiology and should not be confused with the, nevertheless, fascinating conception of the 'vocalic body' or 'voice-body' as elaborated by Steven Connor analysing the cultural history of ventriloquism: 'The principle of the vocalic body is simple. Voices are produced by bodies: but can also themselves produce bodies. The vocalic body is the idea—which can take the form of dream, fantasy, ideal, theological doctrine, or hallucination—of a surrogate or secondary body, a projection of a new way of having or being a body, formed and sustained out of the autonomous operations of the voice. The history of ventriloquism is to be understood partly in terms of the repertoire of imagings or incarnations it provides for these autonomous voice-bodies. It

The multivocal voice is, strictly-speaking, an oxymoron. Usually, the term *voice* signifies *one single* individual, thus one singular entity. The application in plural, of *many voices*, refers to many individuals or entities accordingly. If two contradictory, inappropriate and incongruous (*unstimmig*) terms are put together within one semantic construction, the prerequisites to create an oxymoron are fulfilled. The conceptual pair of the *multivocal voice* would appear to be one such oxymoron. However, it is undeniable that many voices, in a single voice, or in a single vocal apparatus respectively, are not only latent, but truly reside there. Jean-Luc Nancy formulates this aspect as follows:

[...] *la voix est toujours en elle-même articulée (différente d'elle-même, se différenciant elle-même), et c'est pourquoi il n'y a pas la voix, mais les voix plurielles des êtres singuliers.*²⁴

Hence, by using the term *the voice* in the singular, it should not be assumed that only a single voice is indicated.

The multivocal voice eludes clear representation other than that of its own kind, plural in appearance, singular in its uniqueness.²⁵ Multivocality, I claim, is the

shows us clearly that human beings in many different cultural settings find the experience of a sourceless sound uncomfortable, and the experience of a sourceless voice intolerable' (see the sub-chapter 'The Vocalic Body' in Connor, pp. 35-43). After asking 'What kind of thing is a vocalic body?' and 'What sorts of vocalic bodies are there?' Connor amends: 'Such bodies are not fixed and finite, nor are they summarizable in the form of a typology, precisely because we are always able to imagine and enact new forms of voice-body. The leading characteristic of the voice-body is to be a body-in-invention, an impossible, imaginary body in the course of being found and formed' (Ibid., 36).

²³ 'The whole art is to abandon yourself, to allow all the regulatory processes, or cybernetic loops, to operate by themselves. A cybernetic loop is a circuit that has a circular path, with the end returning to the beginning. The act of singing is controlled by a number of such circuits. [...] The organ of control for singing is the ear and the whole system is under control of the listening function' (Tomatis, p. 65). Moreover, giving a striking example for cybernetic control, he says: '[...] when we hear ourselves, we hear a preponderance of lows. When we listen to our own voice on a recording, we are always surprised to hear how we sound. While making sounds in a room with good reverberation, the feedback we get allows us to control high and medium frequencies as well as lows. This is an example of cybernetic control. Singing obeys the same laws of regulation and hearing becomes listening' (Ibid., p. 67). Eventually Tomatis labels the mutually dependent processes of the act of singing and controlling as 'auditory-vocal loops' or 'control loops' parsing them in detail as 'audio-facial loop', 'audio-mandibular loop', 'audio-larynx loop', 'audio-pharyngeal loop', 'audio-lingual loop', 'audio-thoracic loop', 'audio-mouth loop', 'audio-nasal loop', 'audio-recurrent loop', 'audio-lumbar-sacral loop', 'audio-cervical loop' and the 'audio-corporeal loop' (Ibid., pp. 67-76).

²⁴ 'The voice is always divided in itself (different to itself and differentiating itself) and, therefore, there isn't the one voice, but a multiplicity of voices within singular voices' (my translation of Nancy, p. 189).

²⁵ The Italian philosopher and feminist thinker, Adriana Cavarero, puts emphasis on the notion of 'uniqueness' which, from the start, is an intrinsic part of every single voice: 'In the uniqueness that makes itself heard as voice, there is an embodied existent, or rather, a "being-there" [*esserci*] in its radical finitude, here and now. The sphere of the vocal implies the ontological plane and anchors it to the existence of singular beings who invoke one another contextually. From the maternal scene onward, the voice manifests the *unique being* of each human being, and his or her spontaneous self-communication according to the rhythms of a sonorous relation. In this sense, the ontological horizon that is disclosed by the voice—or what we want to call a *vocal ontology of uniqueness*—stands in contrast to the various ontologies of fictitious entities that the philosophical tradition, over the course of its historical development, designates with names like "man", "subject", "individual" (see the chapter 'A Vocal Ontology of Uniqueness', Cavarero, pp. 173 - 182).

intrinsic and veritable determinant of the vocal art voice from today and tomorrow. The multivocal voice doesn't accept being misused through becoming a vocal specialist in the sense of the one-register voice, and thus doesn't accept being wedged in a tight, functional corset. It wants to avoid states of malaise (*Verstimmung*), which appear all too often when an interpreter slips into roles. It can lead to anachronistic and effectively spurious and apocryphal performances if the character has nothing to do with the situation of the present time, as there is the moment of personal development and the sociocultural framework that determine the life of the interpreting artist, on the one hand, and that of the recipient, on the other, at the given time of the performance.²⁶

It is key that the performance voice, if it opens up itself to the possibility of multivocality, develops *including powers* as opposed to adhere *conceptions of exclusivity*. The approach to vocal art practices is usually characterised for being exclusive — compartmentalising, isolating, sealing off the practitioner, and ostracising, segregating. If practising opera singing it's then implicit that one should not rehearse the Rock or Jazz voice. Genre distinctions are strictly preserved in the interests of satisfying the existing market. In this way of thinking, experiments, regardless of type, are also excluded.²⁷ A conventional vocal art voice, according to the traditional Western model, is a *one-register voice* only. In contrast, the conception of the *multivocal voice* rather opposes such considerations just because it resists being restricted. The multivocal voice is not a one-register voice, but a *multi-register voice*.

As a matter of principle, the enabling and the acquisition of a multivocal voice, and thus a multi-tempered voice, presupposes a multivocal thinking, thus an extended thinking. This thinking comprises a thinking in vocal sound banks and in vocal sound entities, a thinking in vowel planes and consonant fields, a thinking in segments, in registers, in vocal range sections, all of which, in regards to the possible entirety of vocal sound areas, exhibit gaps and show sites of fracture. For the voice in the totality of its potentially emerging segmentations produces those gaps naturally, yet cannot, at the present time, be continuous, but rather is non-linear. Looking at the evolution of the voice at the present time reveals the fact that it isn't always possible to continuously and gradually go from one technique to the other. In order to illustrate this thought, I point to the potential of blending two different singing techniques into each other. *Low tone singing*, as I'd like to call it, or harmonic singing, as know from the Mongolian *Kargyraa*-style, sacred chanting of Tibetan monks or the *bassu* voice from the Sardinian *canto a tenore*-tradition, is produced by reinforcing harmonics applying mainly the vibrations from the ventricular folds.²⁸ In contrast, the singing voice from the Western

²⁶ And, in addition, directors that repeatedly try to transpose the works of the old masters (*Alte Meister*) into a contemporary setting by imposing the *Zeitgeist* on them don't change much in regards to the matter as described.

²⁷ And the same applies conversely – artists from the experimental and improvising scene, as a rule, don't think much of belcanto singing, its aesthetics and inscribed sociocultural culture of representation.

²⁸ For all of those readers who may detect a post-colonial issue in applying harmonic low-tone singing techniques, I'd like to counter with a quote by composer and vocalist Michael Edward Edgerton who points out that 'harmonic singing has been reported to have originated around inner Asia, most notably

tradition uses only the vocal folds in order to reach any part of its register and, therefore, also the lowest register. Within the concept of the *multivocal voice* now, the performer tries to gradually cross and blend both techniques even different muscular proportions are applied which is the reason why the task appears to be impossible.²⁹ But that's exactly what the *multivocal voice* sets oneself to do, namely to acknowledge such a paradox and try to dissolve it - not to let the impossible remain impossible, but to venture the experiment, which is in this case the continuous, gradual and unbroken transition from one vocal art technique to the other, and to at least tackle and to eventually try to perform it with an unbiased, thus open attitude. The task and goal are therefore to achieve a *permanent traversing and flowing into each other of the divergent vocal proportions*. Maybe or, in other words, only if this succeeds and such thinking possibilities will have been transformed into unmistakably audible (*unüberhörbar*) realities, the foundations are laid to advance the evolution in a way which brings the human in proximity to his or her actual destiny (*Bestimmung*). For if there is an objective of human evolution at all, then perhaps it's what creates an *outright permeable being*, a kind of *fluidum* of the Self, and therefore approximates a *homo mundi*, that kind of seemingly utopian *earthly human*, no longer foreign to him/herself and the Other³⁰, regardless of her/his respective whereabouts on the globe.³¹ Of course, we are far away from

from Tuva and Mongolia. However, harmonics are universal and are the physical basis behind the quality and strength of the sound produced by instruments (including voice). Although the original style may have originated in central Asia, no one should claim ownership of harmonic reinforcement, but only the significant markers that are unique to a specific style or culture. [...] while elements of a codified tradition may be claimed by members of a particular society, an expression using harmonics disembodied from the culturally identified tradition should be seen for what it is—a musical resource available to all' (Edgerton, p. 60).

²⁹ When touring through Russia in 2002, together with pianist Vladimir Miller, I was told by several people I met along the way that some bass singers coming from Bulgarian and Russian singing traditions are able to blend between the two practices. Unfortunately, at the moment I don't have any examples of practitioners to confirm this assertion.

³⁰ The concept of and distinction between the other and the Other has its roots in psychoanalysis stemming from Sigmund Freud who uses 'the term other speaking of both der Andere (the other person) and das Andere (otherness)' (Evans, p. 135). Influenced also by Parmenides on the one hand and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel on the other, French psychoanalytic Jacques Lacan further developed this concept. 'In 1955 Lacan draws a distinction between the little other (the other) and the big Other (the Other)' (S2, ch. 19), a distinction which remains central throughout the rest of his work. Thereafter, in Lacanian algebra, the big Other is designated A (upper case, for French Autre) and the little other is designated a (lower case italicised, for French autre). Lacan asserts that an awareness of this distinction is fundamental to analytic practice: the analyst must be thoroughly imbued with the difference between A and a (E, 140), so that he can situate himself in the place of Other, and not of the other (Ec, 454). 1. The little other is the other who is not really other, but a reflection and projection of the EGO (which is why the symbol a can represent the little other and the ego interchangeably in SCHEMA L). He is simultaneously the COUNTERPART and the SPECULAR IMAGE. The little other is thus entirely inscribed in the imaginary order. For a more detailed discussion of the development of the symbol a in Lacan's work, see OBJET PETIT A. 2. The big Other designates radical alterity, an other-ness which transcends the illusory otherness of the imaginary because it cannot be assimilated through identification. Lacan equates this radical alterity with language and the law, and hence the big Other is inscribed in the order of the symbolic. Indeed, the big Other is the symbolic insofar as it is particularised for each subject. The Other is thus both another subject, in his radical alterity and unassimilable uniqueness, and also the symbolic order which mediates the relationship with that other subject' (Ibid., pp. 135-136).

³¹ And this could be easy since we are, in technological terms, more connected today than ever before. Living in the age of globalisation and digitisation, we are in fact living in a 'global village', as Marshall McLuhan predicted already in 1964. However, technological progress as we are about to discover doesn't necessarily always support an idea of shaking off fears. Even though one would assume that the

this idea. The vehicle, though, to set off in this direction can be, according to the framework of a *plural society*, the *plural voice* — a specifically experienced as well as consciously imbued concept of multivocality which renders the individual a *human fluidum* that allows him/her to encounter the voice of the Other in the sense of a *looking through* (*hindurchschauen*) and a *listening beyond* (*hinüber hören*), thus a *permeation with an authentic-empathetic gesture*.³²

A few preconditions for how the multivocal voice is able to generate many voices out of one vocal source have already been mentioned as well as the thinking in vocal territories all of which, from day to day, are to be discovered anew. In a more extended sense, but no less important, there are vocal sound areas beyond linguistic classification, such as whistled sounds and combinations of those with voiced or hummed sounds, respectively.³³ All whistled sounds are produced bypassing the regular vocal apparatus. In case of the *lower lip whistling*, as I propose to call it, the airstream gets channelled by the tongue assuming a tube-like form and then directed against the edge of the extremely stretched lower lip which, comparing to the flute playing, serves as mouth piece. This happens on the first level of sound production. On a second level, the fingers come into play and are applied as modulators allowing instant pitch changes that, at a great velocity, can create virtuosic effects such as trills. To give an example see the video documentary of [Searching the Magpie](#),³⁴ an outdoor event for voice and

global interconnectedness of people would reduce fear of the Other, quite the opposite is the case. Internet offers endless opportunities to propagate hatred and discord and to amplify anxiety while social media platforms have the power to seduce the user to live in a bubble cut off from real life which eventually fosters segregation and exclusion. McLuhan considered technology as extensions of man. The car (or bike) is an extension of the running legs, the computer (or pencil) an extension of the writing hands, glasses an extension of our eyes, the loudspeakers an extension of our ears, etc. In consequence, technology as available at the current time is an extension of our consciousness, that has changed to a remarkable degree within an incredibly short period of time. The internet addresses and thus concerns the main senses. We cannot tell at the moment what the effects, as enormous as they are, might entail. With regard to social media, technology has already conquered the social sphere, meaning both the public and private sphere, and therefore changed, at a tremendous speed, the behavioural standards. The ability to develop respect and empathy for others seems to decline when the face-to-face communication is abandoned for the sake of quick electronic comments and instant postings. In this regard, considering the technological progress that we are engendering and at the same time confronted with, the utopian idea of a sustainable way of living together, a vision of genuine solidarity and the willingness for unconditional sharing seems to drift away from us. No matter how multifarious the reasons are, the gap between poor and rich become increasingly bigger, at an unchecked velocity, entailing hierarchical structures, imbalance and injustice on a global scale, all of which accelerate the planet's already severe situation ranging from climate change and its dramatic effects to the devastating impacts on the living conditions of people (those who survived!) in warzones from the Middle East, just to name a few.

³² French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty expressed it bit differently but nevertheless pointed to the same direction saying 'our view of man will remain superficial so long as we do not return to this origin, so long as we do not rediscover the primordial silence beneath the noise of words, and so long as we do not describe the gesture that breaks this silence' (Merleau-Ponty, p. 190).

³³ This is not to be confused with the whistle register that denotes the highest possible register of the female voice according to the operatic singing tradition from the Western culture.

³⁴ See <https://vimeo.com/267405030> [Last accessed 1 May 2018].

potential birds, recorded 2015 by flautist and sound artist Sabine Vogel³⁵ in the rural locality of Bend of Island, Victoria, in Australia.

The multivocal voice seeks exchange. The methodological foundation of the multivocal voice is in fact the exchanging drive to play with other multi-attunements (*Vielgestimmtheiten*). The question arises how playing with other multi-attunements can be understood. It's in this context that a special role is assigned to *mimesis*. Something that needs to be avoided is above all the depletion of the vocal art act by mere imitation.³⁶ For mere imitation, thus the voco-pedagogical means that is often applied here and abroad, carries the risk of caricature and not least the grotesque.³⁷ As a matter of principle, it must be said that pedagogics is always a tool to realise an ideology³⁸ and, accordingly, bears the impress of demagogy.³⁹ Without pedagogics there wouldn't be any ideology, and without ideology no demagogy, without demagogy no ideology and without ideology no pedagogics. Therefore voice pedagogics can be said to release manipulative powers. This requires a word of warning. An artist's instinct must never be subordinated to external vocal education, unless of one's own accord and above all as conscious decision. If this is not taken into account, a style of pedagogics arises that is fallen out of time so-to-speak, and therefore makes itself redundant.⁴⁰

³⁵ See Sabine Vogel's website: <http://www.sabvog.de/en/index.html> [Last accessed 29 April 2018]. For further information on the concept of 'Tuning-in' as environmental arts practice see her article with the eponymous title (Vogel, pp. 327 - 34).

³⁶ 'No art is imitative, no art can be imitative or figurative. [...] One imitates only if one fails, when one fails. The painter and musician do not imitate the animal, they become-animal at the same time as the animal becomes what they willed, at the deepest level of their concord with Nature. [...] Becoming is never imitating. When Hitchcock does birds, he does not reproduce bird calls, he produces an electronic sound like a field of intensities or a wave of vibrations, a continuous variation, like a terrible threat welling up inside us' (Deleuze/Guattari, p. 354 - 55).

³⁷ I'd like to point to the master classes of the famous German baritone, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, who certainly was a fantastic interpreter of German Lied and of the operatic repertoire. He also merits recognition due to a numerous amount of new works that he premiered for both the opera stage and the concert hall. What is striking though is the moment listening to the voices of his disciples. He created a whole generation of baritones that sounded exactly like him. I'm inclined to call them clones as their goal was to erase every tiny little aspect that may have sounded like and reminded them of themselves. This is a good example how voice education can go wrong ways or, in other words, it proves the manipulative powers of vocal pedagogy.

³⁸ Compare paragraph 2 of chapter 12, 'Research or Craftsmanship? Nine theses on the future of an education for the performing arts' by German composer and director Heiner Goebbels: 'Every craft, every technique is ideological. Voice training can extinguish the sound of a personality, can make the biography, the accent, the uniqueness of one's own voice inaudible, in order to conform to a given aesthetic standard. Similar things may be true for singing lessons or other areas – working on roles in actor training and the staging strategies in directing schools, which still struggle artistically to deal with non-psychological, postdramatic texts without dialogue or without linear narrative' (Goebbels, p. 77).

³⁹ According to the online dictionary of Merriam-Webster, *demagogy* is borrowed from the Greek 'demagogos' composed of 'demos', meaning 'the people', and 'agogos', meaning 'leading, impelling'. See <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/demagogy> [Last accessed 30 April 2018].

⁴⁰ Compare Deleuze/Guattari who, in the opening of chapter 4 'Postulates of the Linguistics', dismantles the language as used by the schoolmistress in the classroom situation teaching arithmetic or grammar '[...] and order always and already concerns prior orders, which is why ordering is redundancy. The compulsory education machine does not communicate information; it imposes upon the child semiotic coordinates possessing all of the dual foundations of grammar (masculine-feminine, singular-plural, noun-verb, subject of the statement-subject of the enunciation, etc.). The elementary unit of language—the statement—is the order-word.' (Deleuze/Guattari, p. 88). Further on they confirm the assertion by

An important characteristic of the multivocal voice is that it is nomadic (not to be confused with the voice of the nomads!). The multivocal voice is constantly in transit and thus always carries its *home*. At the same time, it is always looking for the best possible life and framework conditions, making it not only a concept, but an attitude toward life opening up through the exploration of the Other.⁴¹ Only if the *I* unlocks itself and allows the *Other* to enter the voice and, in so doing, incorporates it in order to eventually release it at some later point in time, the *I* experiences approaches of a possible entirety that the multivocal voice continuously searches and strives for. Thus it follows instinct and intuition, on the one hand, and pursues all those traces of the Other that it is able to locate, on the other hand. This means it is also a tracker, insofar as the multivocal voice compares with both an anthropological-cultural archive of voices and a multi-ethnic vocal catalyst.

Rounding off this paragraph and preparing the next, I suggest to listen to the *Labyrinth*,⁴² for 8 loudspeakers and no light (2013), composed at EMS (Elektronmusikstudion) in Stockholm.⁴³ The material of the composition derives, on the one hand, from Berlin-based voices all of which, in different languages, are reciting the poem *Minotaurus* by German stage designer Sonja Kloeveborn.⁴⁴ On the other hand, the piece consists of the voice material stemming from one voice encompassing the countertenor voice and a multitude of vocal sounds produced by various extended vocal techniques that are expanded by either the application of live electronics (*stimmflieger*)⁴⁵ or the use of studio equipment.

Above all, the multivocal voice is recording and playback device in one. It is a chest of memory full of remembrances that are saved within the body until death. Let's look at the example of the countertenor's voice. It is the manifestation of the *retention of the boy's voice over and beyond the puberty vocal change* into the embedding of the muscular proportions of the adult man's voice. In this regard, the countertenor is mainly a memory performance. Of course, there are psychological, gender-specific and socio-cultural moments as well as music-related aspects that act upon the muscular and mental memory. It seems important though to maintain the bridge to this particular memory and not to cut it off. In the case of *retaining the boy's voice beyond adolescence*, it's, above all, the *sound*

saying that 'newspaper, news, proceed by redundancy, in that they tell us what we must think, retain, expect, etc. Language is neither informational nor communicational. It is not the communication of information but something quite different: the transmission of order-words' (Deleuze/Guattari, p. 92). See also the chapter 'Politiken der Stimme (Deleuze)' in Till, pp. 145 - 70 (p. 148).

⁴¹ Compare the artistic research project *Extending Voices, Sampling the Other* by Alex Nowitz in collaboration with the vocal ensemble Auditivvokal Dresden, <https://vimeo.com/219480673> [Last accessed 19 February 2018].

⁴² Listen to <https://soundcloud.com/alexnowitz/labyrinth> [Last accessed 27 April 2018].

⁴³ For further information on EMS, Elektronmusikstudion Stockholm, see the website <http://elektronmusikstudion.se/> [Last accessed 29 April 2018].

⁴⁴ See <http://www.sonjakloeveborn.de/> [Last accessed 1 May 2018].

⁴⁵ For further information see the online article *Voice and Live-Electronics using Remotes as Gestural Controllers*, retrievable at http://econtact.ca/10_4/nowitz_voicelive.html [Last accessed 27 April 2018]. Note that at the time writing the article, I haven't yet given the instrument the name *stimmflieger*. This happened after the article was published.

and, in the more narrow, specifically cultural sense, the *music* that create the bridge.⁴⁶

In conclusion, the work on the multivocal voice is characterised by remembrance work, on the one hand, which allows the performer to draw on a moment once retained, and by the capability to anticipate, on the other, which ensures that the sound captured is elaborately released again, at the right moment and with the help of a forward-looking as well as forward-listening attitude. This storage capacity spans long durations – years, decades, or even one's whole life. Once embodied it won't be forgotten that easily. Often, if untouched for a long time, the once embodied vocal material may slip off into unknown realms of our memory. But it can be retrieved if we pay careful attention to the entirety of musico-sonic and the associated emotional-psychological and sociocultural circumstances that we were in, at the time when we experienced and went through those vocal moments that were to be remembered. All that determines the entirety of our condition to a specific moment in time, must be learnt and rendered memorable and retrievable. Only if this technique of *vocal mnemonics* is made available, are the premises for access (*Rückgriff*) to a vocal treasure created – a treasure which is never really lost but, instead, always awaits its discovery. Once retrieved, we just have to unlock the vocal treasure of the multivocal voice. Perhaps, it is a consequence of our task to insist, ceaselessly, on unclosing our voice. But it is exactly this literal audacity (*Waghalsigkeit*) that allows the anticipation and thus the celebration of vocal treasures that eventually open doors that lead to a better understanding of ourselves, from today to tomorrow, this being one of the necessary conditions not only to contemplate our next evolutionary step, but also to take it.

Bibliography

- Artaud, Antonin, *The Theatre and its Double*, transl. by Victor Corti (London: Alma Classics, 2014).
- Barthes, Roland, *Image, Music, Text*, essays sel. and trans. by Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977).
- Blažanović, Marta, 'Social History of the Echtzeitmusik Scene in Berlin', in *Echtzeitmusik Berlin: Self-defining a Scene*, ed. by Burkhard Beins, Christian Kesten, Gisela Nauck and Andrea Neumann (Hofheim: Wolke, 2011).
- Cavarero, Adriana, *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. by Paul Kottman (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005).
- Connor, Steven, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
- Deleuze, Gilles/Guattari, Félix, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (London, New Delhi, New York, Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2014).

⁴⁶ In the context of an adult-male producing an elaborate and artful countertenor voice, compare the discussion on the notion of *becoming* by Deleuze/Guattari, e.g. 'becoming-music,' 'becoming-child,' 'becoming-woman,' 'becoming-intense,' etc. (Deleuze/Guattari, p. 348 – 60).

- Edgerton, Michael Edward, *The 21st-Century Voice: Contemporary and Traditional Extra-Normal Voice*, The New Instrumentation, No. 9 (Lanham, Toronto, Oxford: The Scarecrow Press, 2004).
- Evans, Dylan, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, (London: Routledge, 1996).
- Goebbels, Heiner, *Aesthetics of Absence: Texts on Theatre*, trans. by David Roesner and Christina M. Lagao, ed. by Jane Collins, consult. ed. by Nicholas Till (London, New York: Routledge, 2015).
- Heidegger, Martin, *Off the Beaten Track*, trans. by Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
- Kane, Brian, 'The Voice: a Diagnosis', *Polygraph*, 25 (2015).
- MacLuhan, Marshall, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (London, New York: Routledge Classics, 1964).
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by Donald A. Landes (London, New York: Routledge, 2014).
- Mersch, Dieter, *Epistemologies of Aesthetics* (Zurich, Berlin: Diaphanes, 2015). —, *Ereignis und Aura: Untersuchungen zu einer Ästhetik des Performativen*, 4th edn, Aesthetica Edition Suhrkamp 2219, ed. by Karl Heinz Bohrer (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2011).
- Nancy, Jean-Luc, *La Communauté Désœuvrée* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1999).
- Nowitz, Alex, 'Designing and Playing the Strophonion: Extending vocal art performance using a custom digital musical instrument', *econtact! 18.3 — Sonic DIY: Repurposing the Creative Self* (December 2016), https://econtact.ca/18_3/nowitz_strophonion.html [Last accessed 27 April 2018].
- , *Extending Voices, Sampling the Other*, Vimeo video 'EXTENDING VOICES, SAMPLING THE OTHER' (4:26), 30 May 2017, <https://vimeo.com/219480673> [Last accessed 19 February 2018].
- , *Labyrinth* (2013), Soundcloud audio 'Labyrinth' (14:22), 17 February 2014, <https://soundcloud.com/alexnowitz/labyrinth> [Last accessed 27 April 2018].
- , *Panache* (2015), Vimeo video 'PANACHE by Alex Nowitz' (1:34), 31 May 2016, <https://vimeo.com/168750034> [Last accessed 27 April 2018].
- , *Playing with Panache* (2015), Vimeo video 'PLAYING WITH PANACHE by Alex Nowitz' (02:02), 16 October 2016, <https://vimeo.com/187540317> [Last accessed 27 May 2018].
- , *Searching the Magpie* (2015), Vimeo video 'Searching the Magpie' (03:44), 1 May 2018, <https://vimeo.com/267405030> [Last accessed 1 May 2018].
- , *Untitled* (2016), Vimeo video 'UNTITLED by Alex Nowitz' (03:29), 16 October 2016, <https://vimeo.com/187541243> [Last accessed 27 April 2018].
- , 'Voice and Live-Electronics using Remotes as Gestural Controllers', *eContact! 10.4 — Live Electronics, Improvisation and Interactivity in Electroacoustics* (October 2008), http://econtact.ca/10_4/nowitz_voicelive.html [Last accessed 27 April 2018].
- Riehn, Rainer, 'Noten zu Cage', in *Musik-Konzepte Sonderband John Cage I*, ed. by Heinz-Klaus Metzger and Rainer Riehn, 2nd edn (Munich: edition text + kritik, 1990).
- Till, Sabine, *Die Stimme zwischen Immanenz und Transzendenz: Zu einer Denkfigur bei Emmanuel Lévinas, Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida und Gilles Deleuze* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2014).

- Tomatis, Alfred A., *The Ear and the Voice*, trans. by Roberta Prada and Pierre Sollier (Oxford: Scarecrow Press, 2005).
- Vogel, Sabine, 'Tuning-in', *Contemporary Music Review*, 34:4 (2016), 327 – 334, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07494467.2016.1140475> [Last accessed 30 April 2018].

FLAVOURS AND FLAVOURINGS: TOWARDS A TYPOLOGY OF ARTISTIC RESEARCH IN MUSIC

Deniz Peters

Abstract

The term Artistic Research has by now become widely accepted as denoting a whole range of practices that combine systematic artistic experimentation with academic and scholarly research methods in the search for improved understanding and extended knowledge. In the past few years, discussants from various musical practices particularly have tended towards proposing models for an understanding of the term that fit individual practices and areas of musical activity (such as composition, or historically informed performance practice), followed by extrapolation, rather than working towards a nuanced, broader, more inclusive view. However, artistic research via and within the interpretation, rehearsal and performance of score-based music, for example, might draw on very different methods (and ways of reflection), than, say, the development of a new instrument (together with its practice), or an inquiry into the aesthetic potential of sonification, or research concerning free improvisation – and nevertheless be artistic research. In this paper I propose as a way of regurgitatively moving the discourse on artistic research further an effort in typological discrimination. Focussing attention on artistic research in music, I shall argue that it can differ as to: (1) levels of reflection, (2) types of knowledge, (3) (inter-)disciplinary situation, (4) methodological complexity, (5) methodological dynamic, (6) documentational rigour, (7) role of co-creativity, (8) role of intersubjectivity, (9) location and scale of experimental core, (10) its question oriented or discovery oriented or invention oriented emphasis, (11) aesthetic domain (immanent, intermedial, extra-artistic) and (12) its market relation. The list is long and open for extension. By raising and deepening the musical case, I aim to trigger similar analyses from other parts of the artistic research organism.

Motivating question: How do we know it's artistic research?

There is a philosophical reason, and a very pragmatic reason for my talk. The philosophical reason is that I am fascinated by the current discourse on artistic research and I want to, quite simply, get a grasp of some tricky and exciting unresolved issues, culminating in this question, issues that seem to pop up wherever artists, thinkers, administrators, and funding agency representants get together in our collective attempt to shape the future of artistic research and its institutionalisation. The pragmatic reason is that, like many in the educational field, I'm confronted with that question everytime I assess an application for a doctoral research project.

You've noted that I've avoided a different, more familiar question, the *what is* question: What is artistic research? At this early¹ stage of getting an idea of a hugely complex phenomenon, it seems premature to want to come up with a definition. Definitions, no matter how tentative, define things. That is, they include and exclude things. And we don't want to exclude the wrong things at this stage. It seems wise, I think, to withstand the definitory urge for a while. Eventually, it might be justified to call for a list of necessary and sufficient conditions for artistic research; but that should wait until we know more about what it is that we are talking about. I, for my part, am convinced that we are only just beginning to *see* the fuller potential of artistic research as an unconventional epistemic practice. So far, when speaking about artistic research in *music*, for example, research questions that concern musically immanent phenomena prevail. But that is only a part of what we might inquire into through musical practice. If we happen to accidentally shut out that other part – questions that concern extramusical phenomena – by way of too narrow a definition – we'd lose a whole dimension of inquiry.

But without a definition, things are more diffuse of course. Which is why I think it is high time we scrutinise our current ability to recognise artistic research. Hence the question: How do we know it's artistic research? My approach to an answer to this question is to distinguish any ingredients that we all refer to when talking about artistic research, and then – in the spirit of this conference – to *savour* their nuances. We refer to reflection, or reflexivity. We refer to method. We refer to documentation. We refer to the production of knowledge. From here, the

¹ With *Artistic Research in Music: Discipline and Resistance* (Leuven University Press, 2017), editor Jonathan Impett compiled a volume of diverse writing on artistic research, observing that 'the relationship between artists and researchers with the academy and with a nascent discipline [...] reaches a stage of maturity'. I tend to agree that this seems true enough for the rapidly growing *institutionalisation* of artistic research; yet our understanding of the epistemological status of the diversity of practices going under this name is arguably less developed.

ingredients under which the plurality of practices can be *further* differentiated, it appears to me, are the following: 1) various levels of reflection and critique; 2) various kinds of knowledge; 3) disciplinary constellation and methodological dynamic; 4) documentational rigour; 5) co-creativity and intersubjectivity; 6) experimentality; 7) epistemic stance: inquisitive (by questioning), observant (via discovery), creative (via invention and imagination); 8) aesthetic and intellectual domain of the investigation; and 9) whether we are dealing with basic or market related research. The list is not exhaustive and open for extension. I shall say a few sentences to three of these aspects now. I then give some examples, and discuss what sort of a typology might emerge from these considerations.

Ingredients

1. Levels of reflection and critique

Reflective practitioners, reflective documentation, reflexivity in art – reflection is one of the most widely mentioned terms in our community, yet it is almost exclusively mentioned in a very general sense to indicate that some sort of serious thinking and ongoing consideration is present during artistic research. There are, however, different levels and modes of reflection that go into artistic research. If the method involves historical research, as in the research into sources and historical cultural practices, then it is clear that reflection would take place at a certain level of rigour and critique. Academic musicological methods require systematic reflection as part of the work. Here it is clear that reflection is most often language based and related to the relevance of historical information to one's current practice. Reflection can also take place on the level of concepts that concern one's artistic research. It seems at once clear that artistic research into transcriptions would benefit from clarifying the notion of transcription in use; it might even affect, refine, and potentially *change* that notion as a result of the artistic research. The same is true for other aesthetic categories key to one's research, be it, say, the ontology of a work for a composer, the ideas of technique and virtuosity for performers, the understanding of empathy for work on ensemble psychology, the notion of improvisation for an improviser, etc. If artistic research is understood as being *basic research*, then the level, extent and kind of reflection undertaken shape its quality.

In short: sources, technologies, concepts and practices can be reflected upon. This is obvious enough. But there is also a reflexivity within musical practice itself that is not straightforward to conceptualise. Yet it concerns a good part of what we

mean when we say that artistic research is not only about art but *proceeds through art*. Musical practice itself is reflective, that is to say, simply, that musicians engage in a mode of thinking when they make music. Jerrold Levinson, in his 2003 chapter on *Musical Thinking*, argues that musical thought can take three forms:

So *one* kind of musical thought is this: musical passages *wearing an appearance of thoughtful acts*, such as questioning, concluding, searching, and the like. But another kind, surely, is this: musical passages *giving evidence of thought processes in their creator*. [...] Yet possibly the most important way in which music is a kind of thought [...] may reside instead in the mere succession from chord to chord, motive to motive, or phrase to phrase at every point in any intelligible piece of music, whether or not there is any suggestion of recognizable extramusical action, or any implication of specific compositional deliberation. Call such musical thinking *intrinsic musical thinking*.

This short perusal of ingredients is not the place to discuss Levinson's suggestion – rather, it is simply to note that when we say that artistic research in music is an epistemic inquiry through music, then we have to be aware of this side of things. An artistic research project might have little in the way of musicology or philosophy as part of its method, yet be very rich in reflection *through* music. This (i.e. the status, form, and place of reflection) is one of the most important issues to clarify in our discourse at the moment. Reflection that is trying to be aware of its limits and own conditions, and remains doubtful² towards its claims, is *critical* reflection. And artistic research can enter critique and self-critique, for instance by analysing one's own creative process and practice. Nicolas Donin's work, for example, has made the self-critique that is an implicit part of the practice of many composers explicit in examples of select contemporary compositional practices.

2. Kinds of knowledge

The various levels of reflection involved in artistic research concern knowledge and understanding. Knowledge, however, is a broad and abstract term. There are different kinds of knowledge, and some artistic research projects might draw on, and importantly, *yield* knowledge of different kinds in different measure. There is much mention of implicit or tacit knowledge, as contrasted from explicit or propositional knowledge,³ and discussants often nearly equate tacit knowledge with *bodily* knowledge, and propositional knowledge with knowledge expressed in and accessible to language. Things are more diverse and complex here as well than

² Thanks to Jørn Mortensen and Therese Kaufmann for raising this point in the discussion.

³ See Henk Borgdorff's and Mark Johnson's chapters in Biggs, M. and Karlsson, H. (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts* (Routledge, 2011) for typical examples of this ready-to-hand distinction.

the broad picture might suggest. Apart from knowledge how, that is, practical knowledge (within which one can distinguish the museum-possession and the workshop-possession of knowledge) and knowledge that – theoretical knowledge – there are other kinds of knowledge not often considered in the discourse: for example knowledge what, differentiated into knowing what to do, knowing what to feel, and knowing what it is like (also called knowledge by acquaintance). Férdia Stone Davis has a research project in preparation that casts a close philosophical look at these issues. And then there is the domain of knowledge to be considered: some knowledge is musical knowledge, while other knowledge is extramusical or reaches beyond music into more general areas.

3. Experimentality

Despite the fact that there are by now some sophisticated edited collections on artistic experimentation in music,⁴ I hardly see the concrete occurrence of this crucial aspect discussed in presentations of specific artistic research. I am not sure why this is so. I don't think experimentation is so obviously present in every situation and level of practice that it is omnipresent. Neither is there a single way in which one can experiment, as Lydia Goehr points out. Nor, importantly, does all experimentation serve an epistemic purpose, lead to discovery, answer questions or yield insight.⁵

Examples and considerations of type

Having just brought to mind three⁶ important ingredients that are in play when we are in the presence of artistic research, I shall now look at the combinations and individual emphases and amplitudes or weights of these ingredients as they seem to characterise some examples of artistic research in music; I shall also consider in what sense they might be said to be *typical* examples.

⁴ E.g., Crispin, D. and Gilmore, B. (eds.), *Artistic Experimentation in Music: An Anthology* (Leuven University Press, 2014).

⁵ A working out of an interpretation might benefit from experimentation at every level of detail, while a compositional process might only engage in experimentation on the level of its unforeseeable qualities when realised by playing. An improvisation might be experimental on the level of ensemble dynamics, while its general aesthetic could be fairly conventional.

⁶ Other ingredients to be discussed elsewhere are: 4. Disciplinary constellation and (methodological) dynamic; 5. Co-creativity and intersubjectivity; 6. Documentational rigour; 7. Mode of procedure: Inquisitive (by questioning), observant (via discovery), creative (via invention); 8. Aesthetic and intellectual domain of the investigation; 9. Basic research or market related research.

Type 1: Artistic research into historical, forgotten, or misconstrued, musical practices. One example for such research is Alexander Mayr's work on the *voce faringea*, a particular vocal production approach and aesthetic from the *bel canto* era in the first half of the eighteenth century (Bellini, Donizetti). Mayr explored his vocal facility aided by live spectral analysis to clarify the aesthetic characteristic, the technical conditions, and evidence of the very existence of this particular way of colouring the voice to be used consistently, intently and successfully in early 19th century repertoire, adding a particular aesthetic approach to the currently existing manners: a mixed register combining *falseto* and modal register. Musicology – in the fields of historically informed performance practice and acoustic analysis – plays an important role in Mayr's methodology. So does instrument building, with the instrument being his own voice and body. Reflection thus occurred *about* musical practice, but also *through* musical practice, in that Mayr tried to make sense musically of the vocality he originally only intuited to be more than his personal vocal nuance and facility. Mayr's slowly unfolding and developing understanding of the aesthetic through repertoire work in oscillation with the analytically supported vocal experiments together, shaped his grasp of the *voce faringea*'s identity as an instrument. The problem dealt with, and what is learnt as a result of the research, is mainly *musical*, both in terms of aesthetic understanding and practical achievement. Mayr *rediscovered* a historical practice and has published extensively on it, including pedagogical articles. He could not have achieved the high quality of his musical result – relevant to other singers – without systematic historical research and acoustic analysis, and he could not have reached it without his goal directed vocal experimentation.

Variants of Mayr's example are performers who, via artistic research, enhance or extend a particular instrumental practice. Christopher Redgate has revolutionised the Oboe in both design and playing. Susanne Fröhlich's doctoral work into a particular flute, the Helder Tenor, is promising to be similarly significant. Both Redgate and Fröhlich have added depth to their critical engagement with the aesthetic dimension of their practice by working collaboratively not only with luthiers but also with composers. This introduces an intersubjective dimension with added benefits: Redgate's advances in sheer virtuosity and Fröhlich's advances in expressivity leave the realm of subjective practice by occurring in direct exchange with peers.

Type 2: Artistic research into current and future aesthetics. Composers, improvisers and performers who (like Redgate and Fröhlich in the preceding example) work on inventing or discovering alterations to prevailing aesthetics often – but not always – do this by using innovative or at least recent technologies in exploring sonic possibilities. The drive here is mainly musical, but it can also be

theoretical. Gerriet Sharma's artistic research in which he composed for a 20-faced, icosahedric speaker, is aimed at better understanding the way we hear cohesion within the spatial distribution and motion of sounds. Sharma's work oscillates between compositional experiments, empirical tests, theoretical reflection supported by literature in aesthetics and especially on the concept of space, improvisatory performances and scored performances, all to the purpose of clarifying the practical and intellectual understanding of the aesthetic experience and potential of sound spatialisation.

Type 3: While the former two cases of artistic research are typical for music-centred work involving a historical research aspect and, on the other hand, innovative technologies, the last example I want to give today remains in the present. This is from my own work, and it places an even stronger double emphasis on the furtherance of both musical practice *and* theoretical understanding than the other examples. My artistic research is ultimately motivated by the desire to advance our understanding of what musical expression is, and what role emotions, moods, feelings, attitudes and other affective states do and don't play in it. In a nutshell, I experiment – by way of free duo and trio improvisation – with issues of interpersonal intimacy. During the course of the research I have discovered and understood some important conditions for establishing a shared voice between two or three performers, who nevertheless remain autonomous. The resulting improvisations are relational, in the sense that they are an expression of a mutually empathetic relationship, and I've reached this level of genuinely dialogical invention with a large number of improvisers within days of encounter rather than years of ensemble work. At the same time, the particular quality and understanding of the experiential phenomena reached is relevant for the philosophy of emotion, and confirms and adds to Angelika Krebs's argument, which is one of the most sophisticated philosophical thought on feeling together in current philosophy. The results were found by thinking *about* togetherness *through* music. This is a case where the reflection going on in the music making is not only about a musical phenomenon, but a social and psychological one.

A post-ultimate example of artistic research that is not only about a musical practice but, through this practice, addresses a question larger than music, is Bennett Hogg's work – especially his installations and performances within the landscape quartet. Hogg's work aims not only at a better understanding of nature through musicking with it; he also aims at giving back something to nature by way of raising human awareness aesthetically. It is in work like Hogg's where the ethical potential of artistic research becomes particularly highlighted.

A preliminary conclusion

What to me is striking in these examples is that they stand for cases of constellations of ingredients in artistic research that are fairly independent from the area of musical practice and skills involved. One can find similar settings where the core practice is one of improvisation, or interpretation or composition, or installatory work, sound art, or intermedial work. What is characteristic, or typical, rather, is the structure of the reflexivity in play, and whether it goes across music and the extramusical. Rather than thinking that a historical musicology component will automatically turn a developing artistic practice into artistic research (which might in some cases result in a flavouring rather than a flavour), or that work with electronic or digital media *per se* will have this same effect (which might, again in some cases, result in a flavouring rather than a flavour), we can look closely at evidence of reflexivity that goes into the research, and we can look out for musical questions or dissatisfactory states of affairs, or extramusical questions or dissatisfactory states of affairs, and better know whether what we are experiencing or assessing is artistic research. Time will tell which types, marked by what reflexivity, will come out as genuine varieties of artistic research, genuine flavours of what we all sometimes like to think of as a new epistemic paradigm. The clearer we end up distinguishing between flavours and flavourings, the more we shall know, and enjoy, what's on the plate, and at stake.

Bibliography

- Crispin, D. and Gilmore, B. (eds.) (2014), *Artistic Experimentation in Music: An Anthology*. Leuven: Leuven University Press.
- Impett, J. (ed.) (2017), *Artistic Research in Music: Discipline and Resistance*. Leuven: Leuven University Press.
- Biggs, M. and Karlsson, H. (eds.) (2011), *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts*. Abingdon: Routledge.

WHAT REMAINS? – A REVERSE-COOKING EXERCISE

Anna Romanenko, Matteo Locci, Thomas Guillot et al.

Abstract

We took the provocation *Artistic Research Will Eat Itself* as a stimulus to think about *how*. How exactly would artistic research be devoured? Does it start from the tail, what part would be devoured first, and then, could whatever was left be still called the same? As half-eaten items are better imagined than described in words we tried to experiment with guided imaginations of subtractive procedures. We are a group of researchers working inside a PhD-level practice-based programme, 'Document & Contemporary Art', at the European School of Visual Art, in France. Our research is by definition collective, we build tools of playful encounters, the following thought experiment is such a tool.

How much is still there?

When you come to art from another field and for a while you rotate in both circles you might have noticed a very peculiar thing: when you go for a drink with your fellow architects, people from theatre, musicians, etc. they tend to talk about their field, discuss new things that had appeared, analyse particular projects. Professionals in visual arts however tend to talk about football, food, or other unrelated things. Or probably even related. Related in a way anything is or is not related to art at the same time. Being considered a strength of art this circumstance places art in distress once you start considering it as research.

There is one more aspect to this: for instance in theatre you see something good and you say: Wow, that was interesting, I am going to use this also in my next production. At the same time this is somehow not a possible position for a visual artist. As a visual artist you always live with a demand to produce something unprecedented in a completely new yet universal way. This sounds trivial, but it points to another structural difficulty when one starts thinking in terms of research. Not only is it impossible to delineate a field, but, if there is something adjacent to your practice, it is complicated to build upon it. One would have to work with the referentiality of the work once it does display a reference. Which would have repercussions for its status etc.

As an artist you miss your peers. You are researching art behaviour and architecture, and your colleagues? Well, one of them does drawings inspired by Korean pornography, the other builds little robots to populate suicide prevention nets in Switzerland and the third is combatting copyright-laws by community

oriented projects involving machines for the digitalization of books. These are not made up, these are real people, my friends, and their practices. But all this also doesn't prevent us from talking about artistic research. Only, maybe we have to admit that this research is most of the time a lonely enterprise.

Wright down 3 or more features removable from artistic research

You may or not refer to your own practice, your friends' friends' or keep it abstract

- | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 <u>galleries</u> | 2 <u>universities</u> | 3 <u>methods, training</u> |
| 4 <u>ontology</u> | 5 <u>epistemology</u> | 6 <u>methodology</u> |
| 7 <u>subtraction</u> | 8 <u>restoration</u> | 9 <u>assemblage</u> |

+ X -

When done pass the list to your closest colleague.

Make sure you are the aforementioned colleague of the previous list's writer.

What would happen once the removal is applied?

Write about your research and how it would be influenced once one or more of the elements listed above are removed. How would it still be artistic research?

A question + an equation +
~~Something unrecognizable +~~
~~which defines artistic research~~ → the erased +
 the emergent thing + the non-reproducible
 thing + instance of difference + unusable +
 the problem + not the solution

Name Un-named, non-authored, untitled

1. Artefact from the lecture-performance-exercise at the conference
 Yet there is possibility for conversation. So what is it, practice based research in the arts? A conversation about artistic research – as counterintuitive as it sounds –

is more often than not akin to a religious dispute. On the one hand there are personal experiences and accounts by individual artists. That, as we have just seen, seldom build on existing research done by others.

And on the other hand there always is that person who would say that artistic research didn't exist. That is was invented to access funds for the third cycle; that there are a lot of artists with a work with questionable research qualities who are looking for a teaching position; that putting artists in academia ruins their art, that is just is different, the list could continue indefinitely.

The figure of the denier is quite powerful. The likeness to religion is maybe due to the creational aspects that one assumes are being part of artistic production and would inevitably enter artistic research. Maybe it's just because artistic research in fact doesn't exist and just is an tool that serves economic purposes. Maybe it emerged when a bunch of philosophers migrated to cultural theory.

Whatever the cause of this peculiar similarity to a theological dispute, it seems sufficient an excuse for borrowing and defecting an operation from theology that has been widely used in defining god starting in ancient Greece. It is the operation of apophatic theology. Apophatic theology has also been called negative theology for its subtractive. The apophatic way of working towards an understanding is instead of adding up attributes that would define god, does list things that do not define him. Theologians like Meister Eckhart and Saint John of the Cross (San Juan de la Cruz) have exemplified some aspects of or tendencies towards the apophatic tradition. In 1215 apophatism became the official position of the Catholic Church, which, during the Fourth Lateran Council formulated the following dogma: 'Between creator and creature no similitude can be expressed without implying an even greater dissimilitude.'

So how do we apply negative theology onto reasoning artistic research, which, not unlike a deity relates to all phenomena likewise and yet is not described by these? It would be boring and maybe even impossible to list things that don't belong to artistic research. As we have noticed, off-topic things are tough to find. One would state: Artistic research is not about bureaucracy, but of course it is. It is not about events. But it sometimes is. One would state: ok, artistic research, that's not about worms, but there is this artist whose research is about worms. And so on. Talking about a "feld" where a clear negation seems impossible we can only talk about coefficients of artistic research at the most. By altering the apophatic operation accordingly we arrive at a mental game, a thought experiment testing the idea of artistic research through similitude and dissimilitude by applying the

Wright down 3 or more features removable from artistic research

You may or not refer to your own practice, your friends' friends' or keep it abstract

Repeatable
1 *Method* 2 _____ 3 _____
4 *Funding* 5 _____ 6 _____
7 *Dissemination* 8 _____ 9 _____

When done pass the list to your closest colleague.

Make sure you are the aforementioned colleague of the previous list's writer.

What would happen once the removal is applied?

Write about your research and how it would be influenced once one or more of the elements listed above are removed. How would it still be artistic research ?

1 *method would adapt unpredictably*
2 *wed find other sources, but there*
would be fewer of us
3 *nobody would know, except*
by word of mouth and
by untreliving

Name _____

2. Artefact from the lecture-performance-exercise at the conference

operation of extraction to it. Artistic research minus X. The hypothesis would be that if X is “essential” it would lead to a greater extend of dissimilitude, if the mental image does not change – it was less related, et cetera. Inspired by the conference's proposition of digestion and cuisine we can imagine the subtractive

procedures in the shape of recipes. Every recipe starts off at an imagined whole of artistic research, then it takes things away from the whole of this imagination.

First we have to invoke the mental image of artistic research:

- concentrate
- take artistic research
- take away photography
- restore

try again:

- take artistic research
- take away funding
- and now take away more funding

(If you still can picture artistic research it means it isn't solely a product of funding)

- restore

- take artistic research
- take the best artistic research you are familiar with
- take away Deleuze
- did it change?
- restore

Lets take a step back and make a little gymnastics with actual recipes:

- take yogurt
- remove the spoon
- take away the packaging
- take away the bacteria
- take away the cow
- take away the expiration date
- restore

- take lemonade
- take away cinema imagery
- take away Amalf
- take away the bottle
- take away the vitamins
- take away the ice
- take away water
- restore
- take Panettone
- take away pandoro.
- take away the shape

- take away Moscato d'asti
- take away any other sweat wine
- take away christmas
- restore

Wright down 3 or more features removable from artistic research

You may or not refer to your own practice, your friends' friends' or keep it abstract

1 making objects 2 discussion 3 planning
4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____
7 _____ 8 _____ 9 _____

When done pass the list to your closest colleague.

Make sure you are the aforementioned colleague of the previous list's writer.

What would happen once the removal is applied?

Write about your research and how it would be influenced once one or more of the elements listed above are removed. How would it still be artistic research?

More spontaneous
Embedded
Performative
No way to articulate what research element is
1) I would be able to sing without making objects.
2) I would not be able to receive feedback from my peers,
which was a major part of my project.
3) I would not be able to do anything without planning.
The answer to the last question is: No.

Name

[Signature]

3. Artefact from the lecture-performance-exercise at the conference
Lets get back to artistic research:
- take artistic research

- take away photography
- take away photography as practice
- now a take away photography as documentation
- from the newspapers,
- from the magazine covers
- from inside the magazines

- take Artistic research
- take away events
- restore

- take Artistic research
- take away research done in architecture
- take away research done in music
- take away research done in dance
- take away philosophy commissioned for the arts
- restore

- take artistic research
- subtract expertise
- restore
- take artistic research
- subtract nation states
- restore

- take artistic research
- subtract the concept of the individual
- restore

- take artistic research
- subtract the aesthetic function
- restore

Wright down 3 or more features removable from artistic research

You may or not refer to your own practice, your friends' friends' or keep it abstract

- 1

money
- 2

Secrets
- 3

expected
- 4

Impact
- 5

artemes
- 6

new knowledge
- 7

Things - bits
- 8

conclusions
- 9

Theories
- memories

emotions

words / images
- When done pass the list to your closest colleague.

Make sure you are the aforementioned colleague of the previous list's writer.

What would happen once the removal is applied?

Write about your research and how it would be influenced once one or more of the elements listed above are removed. How would it still be artistic research ?

? This is the question. Simulate the subtraction, experiment within new conditions.

Name

4. Artefact from the lecture-performance-exercize at the conference

RADICALLY EMANCIPATED: OR “I HAVE STOLEN FOR THE LOVE OF ART”

Mireia c. Saladrigues

Radically Emancipated is an ongoing documentary work comprising video capsules, objects and documents. Somewhere between the prohibited and the sublime, it looks at the experience of thefts of fragments of artworks in Spain. The project started in **2011** and can be viewed online.¹

Typology of paper

This text was written following an intentionally non-academic quoting of articles and interviews, published throughout **2011** and **2012**, concerning the ongoing project Radically Emancipated. Such plagiarism is an exercise of alignment with the work, a transference into the text of the act of appropriation. Therefore, most of the parts of this paper are not of my authorship, and I do not necessarily mention the ‘cannibalized references’ on every occasion, with the exception of the authors listed in the bibliography.

Plagiarized authors

Brahim, Alex (**2011**); Fernández Pan, Sonia (**2011**); Hispano, Andrés and Pérez-Hita, Félix (**2011**).

Mentioned authors

Bennett, Tony (**1995**); Berghe, Rene Alphonse van den (**2012**); Bourdeau, Pierre (**1991**); Campbell, Karin (**2011**); Cavalucci, Fabio (**2009**); Cohen, Stanley (**1973**); Dominguez Rubio, Fernando (**2014**); Leader, Dorian (**2002**); Rancière, Jacques (**2009**); Riemens, Patrice (**2011**); Silva, Elizabeth. B (**2013**).

Mentioned artworks

Bande à part by Jean Luc Godard (**1964**), Sunflower Seeds by Ai Wei Wei (**2010**), Silence of Nduwayezu by Alfredo Jaar (**1997**), Provisoria by Ria Verhaeghe (**1996**), Stolen Pieces by Franco and Eva Mattes **0100101110101101.org** (**1995-1997**), Duke of Wellington by Francisco Goya (**1812 - 1814**), Untitled (Portrait of Ross in L.A.) by Felix Gonzalez-Torres (**1991**), David by Michelangelo Buonarroti (**1501-1504**), The Hay Wain by John Constable (**1821**).

Keywords

- Fetishism, cannibalism, eroticism, impulse, understanding, prank, trace, desire to transcend the ephemeral experience of contemplation, irreverence, participation.
- Love of art, communion, dialogue, rapport, use, consumption, tribute,

¹ <http://www.mireiasaladrigues.com/w/radicalment-emancipats>

statement.

- Ephemeral experience, knowledge, close relation, metonymic relation.
- Poetic, political, symbolic and economic value.
- Security codes, safeguarding, artistic jurisdiction, prohibition.
- Cultural capital, cultural domain, distribution of the sensible, social distribution, economical distribution.
- Art theft, attack, vandalism, kidnapping, destruction, painting.
- Theft and appropriation as intrinsic to creation.

Erik el Belga (Erik the Belgian) is a nickname for René Alphonse van den Berghe.² He is the most notorious European white-collar criminal of the twentieth century, with the theft of over 6,000 Romanesque and Gothic works of art from Spanish churches, cathedrals, and museums attributed to him. He explains that his real motivation for these robberies is ‘the love of art’.³ This statement is so central to his story, that he used it as the title for his autobiography published in 2012.

This talk is neither about economic theft nor about professional art thieves who commit robberies for a capricious customer. Removing a fragment from an artwork⁴ is not motivated by economic speculation. Rather, it implies a close relationship with that work, or that artist, and (or) very specific knowledge. This was also the case with Erik el Belga, an antique dealer who had been taught about medieval art by his grandfather and about painting by his mother.

What is interesting about these particular thefts –and unlike the jobs coordinated by organized gangs– is that they are committed by individuals who are visitors to art institutions. At any moment, the urge can suddenly strike –like love or death– or it can be understood as an impulse that sets into these spectators who become accomplices of the artwork by deciding to ‘pinch off’ a little piece.

Out of context and far from content, the removed parts lack value and, therefore, cannot be economically quantified. Consequently, it is impossible to sell or deal with them and, therefore, they remain at the margins of the fourth most lucrative

²Born in Belgium in 1940, he now lives a quiet life in Málaga, Spain.

³Marín, K. ‘Everything is easy to steal. It depends on who commissions you’. In *El País* 14 March 2012. Available at: http://elpais.com/elpais/2012/03/14/inenglish/1331737684_726843.html [Accessed 5 Apr. 2018]

⁴By artwork, I also mean art project, proposal or any other form of art.

illegal business in the world.⁵

Hence, the subtracted elements could be kept in a drawer, and if someone opened it, he or she could –in the best of cases and depending on how they are being kept– imagine an arrangement in a particular constellation, forming an intimate collection. In the worst case, should the owner not be there to explain, the fragments could easily end up in the garbage, as insignificant objects.

Therefore, the metonymic relationship established between the collector and the fragment/s is essential. And maybe, as a sort of relic, one keeps a small part of an artwork due to the inability to acquire the entire piece. Through the fragment, the collector brings to mind the whole artwork, feels closer to the artist(s) and sometimes even recalls the moment, the act of theft or the disobedience of the tacit rules.

Andrés Hispano and Félix Pérez-Hita clarify that this fetishist relation to a ‘chip’ of an artwork must be differentiated from the connections with relics or amulets of other traditions and superstitions. Possessing a relic meant enjoying special protection. This aroused desire and a roaring trade in relics. Given their strong social, economic and cultural significance, relics have always been subjected to theft and falsification. This is also the case of many works of art, like Amadeo Modigliani paintings⁶ or the Vermeer forgeries by Han van Meegeren –one even made its way into the collection of Hermann Göring⁷–, but the forging of a fragment of an artwork has, thus far, not occurred and, most probably, never will.

⁵ Each year, art thefts account for approximately four to six billion dollars of losses worldwide. Due to the magnitude of the problem, the International Criminal Police Organization, commonly known as Interpol, continually collects data about art thefts and recoveries. With 192 member countries, the international police organization has catalogued around 50,000 stolen works of art. Using Interpol's wealth of data, a recent analysis by *Element Paints* has announced the following: ‘Art theft is big business. [...] In terms of dollar value, the crime is only exceeded by drug trafficking, money laundering and arms dealing.’ Available at: <https://www.elementpaints.com/shocking-interpol-art-theft-stats-reveal-a-major-problem/> [Accessed 6 Apr. 2018].

⁶ A major exhibition of Modigliani at the Palazzo Ducale in Genova in 2017 contained twenty-one works suspected to be forged. Several people involved in the show were under investigation by authorities, among them, Rudy Chiappini, the exhibition's curator and Hungarian art dealer Joseph Guttman, who allegedly loaned eleven of the disputed paintings: <https://news.artnet.com/exhibitions/art-lovers-demand-refund-fake-modigliani-exhibition-1197245> [Accessed 5 Apr. 2018].

⁷ Han van Meegeren (1889–1947), a Dutch painter and portraitist, is considered the most successful and most influential art forger ever. Despite his life of crime, van Meegeren became a national hero after WWII when it was revealed that he had sold a forged painting to Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring during the Nazi Occupation of the Netherlands.

Back to the relative economic value of a fragment, the spectator might be moved to subtraction knowing that, once the exhibition has ended, most of the contemporary works will be dismantled and their elements returned to circulation according to their use. As I have video-documented, other motives for these peculiar thefts include an impulse, a fetishistic drive, a desire to participate, an 'I get what you mean' the intention to leave a trace, a prank, an irreverent gesture against the strict codification of the exhibition space, the intention to put the artwork into circulation, the wish to know more about the artist, like an act of cannibalism, or an erotic compulsion, actually there is a great diversity of causes, I would say, almost as many as spectators who 'pinch' the artworks.

It is the thief's very lack of professionalism that places these acts on hazy and hesitant ground; without any clear or defined attitude. And therefore, guards and restorers find these "sporadic attacks of kleptomania" awkward, destructive and even potentially dangerous. Museum workers are afraid that the removal of fragments of artworks could become common practice.

Generally, these appropriations are considered by social consensus as acts of vandalism, but many of the perpetrators see their actions as exercises in profound and respectful communion with the work. They may even have a broad knowledge of the 'attacked' work or the desire to transcend the ephemeral experience of contemplation, through a kind of 'biting off'.

We could understand such appropriations as statements on the poetry and politicization required for the inner time use of the artwork, beyond disposable consumption and the domain of safeguarding. Yet the person who makes such appropriations does not necessary have such (or any) theoretical constructions. Some have argued that the vigilance of security cameras and guards as well as the admonishments to keep quiet, to look and not touch, transport them back to childhood. So why would one not race around the Louvre⁸ or steal a handful of porcelain sunflower seeds?⁹

Moreover, some artworks have been created envisaging the need to take

⁸ In the film *Bande à part* by Jean Luc Godard (1964) the main characters run through the museum. Years later, Mario Garcia Torres took this scene as a reference for his artworks: <https://notocarporfavor.wordpress.com/2013/02/15/los-viceversas-del-pretecto-algunas-relaciones-entre-cine-y-museo/> [Accessed 5 Apr. 2018].

⁹ *Sunflower Seeds* by Ai Wei Wei (2010) was installed at the Turbine Hall of the Tate Modern from 12 October 2010 - 2 May 2011. Further information at <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/unilever-series/unilever-series-ai-weiwei-sunflower-seeds> [Accessed 4 Apr. 2018].

something from the work itself. Hence, the ‘pinching’ becomes part of the proposal and is even accepted by the artist as another possible bond between the spectator and the work. This is the case, for example, of *Untitled (Portrait of Ross in L.A.)*, 1991 by Felix Gonzalez-Torres, consisting of 175 pounds of candy corresponding to Ross’s ideal body weight. Viewers are encouraged to take a piece of candy; the diminishing amount alludes to Ross’s weight loss and suffering prior to his death by AIDS-related causes. Gonzalez-Torres stipulated that the pile should be continuously replenished, thus metaphorically granting perpetual life.¹⁰ A similar sort of spectator engagement occurred unintentionally with Alfredo Jaar’s installation *The Silence of Nduwayezu*:¹¹ he let visitors ‘steal’ the slides that composed the work after observing the first cases of theft. Jaar expresses his position in a letter in which he states that he gave the following instructions to the guards: “You should not encourage the appropriation, don’t invite people to take slides. But in the case you’ll spot one visitor removing any, don’t stop it. Proceed as if you wouldn’t be seeing the situation.”¹²

The first interviewee¹³ of *Radically Emancipated* is that of a regular visitor of museums and art galleries who subtracted a book from the matrix of *Provisoria*¹⁴ by Ria Verhaeghe. She anonymously explained that, sometimes, the artwork has such a powerful force that it pushes one to steal from it, “as if

¹⁰ Related to this work, *The Reappearance of Ross* is an action by Cauleen Smith documented in a WordPress blog in which she resolved to recuperate the body of Felix Gonzalez-Torres’s late boyfriend Ross Laycock, from the Art Institute of Chicago and place it in her bedroom at Roots and Culture Contemporary Art Center. She managed to more than double the amount of Ross in her bedroom, despite the strict restrictions on the colourful candies. Available at: <http://reappearanceoffross.wordpress.com/> [Accessed 4 Apr. 2018].

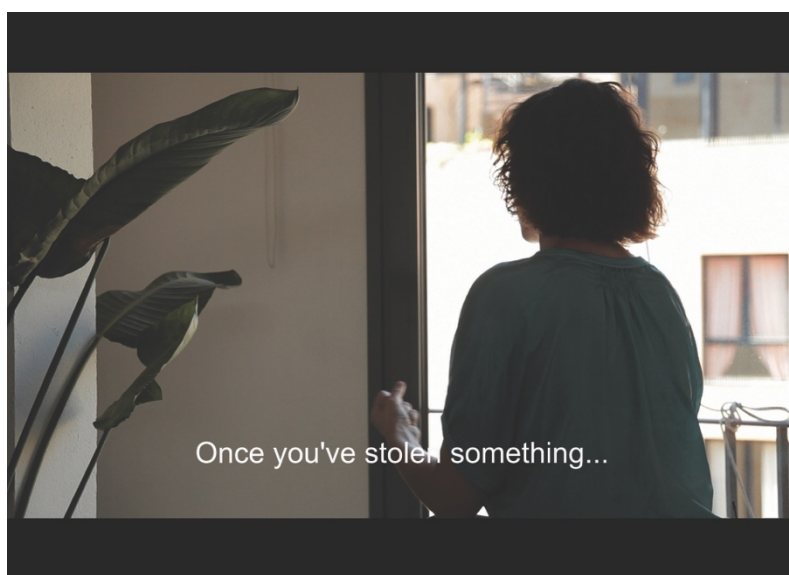
¹¹ *The Silence of Nduwayezu*, 1997 comprises a million slides, a light table measuring 36 x 217 3/4 x 143 inches, magnifying glasses, and an illuminated wall text. The slides are all copies of the same image: the eyes of Nduwayezu, a witness of the Rwandan Genocide. Further information at <http://www.pbs.org/art21/images/alfredo-jaar/the-silence-of-nduwayezu-1997?slideshow=1> [Accessed 4 Apr. 2018]

¹² Letter from Alfredo Jaar to Mireia c. Saladrigues on 20th June 2011 for the project *Radically Emancipated*. It compiles a conversation and some correspondence concerning the almost mystical reaction of spectators who took slides from this work *The Silence of Nduwayezu*, 1997. It also exposes the decisions the artist took after watching the surveillance camera recordings. A picture can be found at http://www.mireiasaladrigues.com/w/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/IMG_7710_dbgweb.jpg [Accessed 4 Apr. 2018]

¹³ *Radically Emancipated_Capsule 7 - Testimony 1*. (2011). [video] 2 min 54 s. <https://vimeo.com/73682568#at=0> [Accessed 4 Apr. 2018].

¹⁴ *Provisoria* is an ongoing alternative image bank, based on newspaper pictures. It comprises approximately 25,000 photographs accumulated over twenty years. They are organized according to a few keywords, colours, dates and groups, in order to elaborate another dimension for newspaper photographs to be digitally accessed. Departing from the photos compiled in *Provisoria*, and jointly with pictures and records of his own life, Ria Verhaeghe creates new pieces of art using collage, drawing, painting, sculpture, slides and experimental video. Available at: <http://www.provisoria.net/> [Accessed 6 Apr. 2018].

calling you.” This is what happened when, taking advantage of the absence of surveillance cameras and guards, she felt the urge to make the work hers, disconnecting the threads linking all the very special handmade books and removing one. She continues by explaining that the guard noticed the gap and discreetly warned security, without her realizing. The action was politely addressed upon her exit, while she was returning the audio guide, and she ran away forgetting her identity card. Coming back two days later to return the book and recuperate her ID, she contemplated how small subtractions adulterate and even spoil other visitors’ experiences of the work. Thus, she decided to emancipate herself from her own impulses and to stop taking home fragments of artworks.



Radically Emancipated_Capsule 7 - Testimony 1. (2011). [video] 2 min 54 s.

Another anonymous visitor¹⁵ is a relatively young artist who appropriated two slides of Alfredo Jaar's installation, among other objects. He explains that he would never subtract a part of an artwork that would defuse it, and he would never steal an entire work, but his fetishistic impulse emerges as a need to own what he wants to know more about. However, the first interviewee argues that even in the case of Jaar's installation, comprising a million copies of the

¹⁵ *Radically Emancipated_Capsule 9 - Testimony 3.* (2013) [video] 3 min 6s. Available at: <https://vimeo.com/66336781#at=0> [Accessed 4 Apr. 2018].

same slide, removing one or two slides changes the intention of the artwork, since the amount of copies corresponds to the number of victims during the Rwandan Genocide.



Radically Emancipated_Capsule 9 – Testimony 3. (2013) [video] 3 min 6s.

Franco and Eva Mattes, also known as 0100101110101101.org, have a very unorthodox opinion about the matter after becoming frustrated with the experience of viewing vibrant masterpieces in staid museum environments. Between 1995 and 1997, they secretly removed small parts of artworks by – among others –, Marcel Duchamp, Joseph Beuys, Jeff Koons or Claes Oldenburg. Placed together, these form part of their work *Stolen Pieces*.¹⁶ Franco argues, ‘Works are not holy. They’re not relics. It’s way more dynamic one would think and I don’t think that we should look at art with that kind of reverence’.¹⁷

It could be said that appropriation and theft are intrinsic to artistic creation. If

¹⁶ Over a period of two years, they worked on this secret art project stealing dozens of fragments of masterpieces by famous artists from the most renowned museums in the United States and Europe. They publicly revealed the work in 2010. Further information at <http://0100101110101101.org/stolen-pieces/> [Accessed 4 Apr. 2018]

¹⁷ Franco Mattes in Williams, J. ‘Stolen Pieces’. *WNYC Culture*, May 24, 2010. Available at: <http://www.wnyc.org/story/62860-stolen-art/> [Accessed 6 Apr. 2018].

we look at it from a broader perspective, we can find that stealing is one of the founding myths of Western culture. In Genesis, Eve steals the apple from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, while in ancient Greece the Titan Prometheus steals fire from the gods and gives it to humankind. As Félix Perez-Hita and Andrés Hispano write, we should not be surprised that the museum –of the nineteenth century kind– is presented to us as warehouses, our treasure trove of objects that have been displaced, assembled, stolen and dug up here and there, in the confines of every empire. Some think that the rest are not much to speak of, even those other museums that have shed their ornamental shell, with white rooms that display the collections of magnates, always assembled in shady circumstances.

Moreover, we can here consider how much one of the main functions of the museum has completely transformed. From the container in which valuable objects –the sediment of what is called culture– were presented, to the place where the changes, transgressions and transformations of the world are shown. Nowadays, we tend to think that we go to museums to see what is alive and moving, whereas the museum of the nineteenth century hosted that which was fixed and canonized, or in other words, what was not meant to be questioned. In general, the anxious spectator needs to recognize, as well as understand, wherefrom all that is exposed comes. Then the visitor can judge, make sense or simply contextualize the fact of having to contemplate the artworks while knowing that morally he or she has the right to touch them.

From a Romantic point of view, and speculating on the possibility of hypersensitive persons –of a special rapport with certain artworks– we could conclude that thefts, along with vandalisms, kidnappings, destructions, and other forms of attack are a form of elevated dialogue with art. At the age of 47, the artist Piero Cannata dealt a hammer blow to the first phalanx of the second finger of the left foot of *David's* Michelangelo. In his own words, 'It was Veronese's beautiful Nani who asked me to hit the *David*.'¹⁸ Charged with degrading Italian artistic heritage, Cannata was tried, labelled mentally ill, and sent to a psychiatric hospital.¹⁹

¹⁸ Cowell, A. (1991) Michelangelo's David Is Damaged. *New York Times*. [online] Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/09/15/world/michelangelo-s-david-is-damaged.html> [Accessed 5 Apr. 2018] and Nonjoiner. (2014) *Classic Odd News: David's Toe Smashed by Hammer-Wielding Man* [Blog] Wafflesatnoon. Available at: <http://wafflesatnoon.com/davids-broken-toe/>. [Accessed 5 Apr. 2018].

¹⁹ His case is briefly explained by Dario Gamboni in his book (1991) *The Destruction of Art: Iconoclasm and Vandalism since the French Revolution*. London: Reaktion Books.



Radically Emancipated Capsule 2 - Andres Hispano (2011) [video] 4 min 17s.

Stanley Cohen, one of the first contemporary sociologists to study vandalism, has considered it a 'type of reality negotiation'³⁰ and therefore no act or type of vandalism is immune to being involved in this struggle. Based on Piero Cannata's words and the different motives of the video-recorded interviewees I can also affirm that the vandalism of artworks cannot be understood independently of certain artistic or theoretical dialogues. Political, feminist, theological, aesthetic, pathological, and other kind of motivations deal with the economic or symbolic value of the pieces or the art spaces. Paul Douglas Manning, member of *Fathers4Justice*, an organization that objects to the family courts system, was arrested after a photograph was stuck to the canvas of John Constable's *The Hay Wain* at the National Gallery in June 2013. Another example is the theft of Francisco Goya's portrait of the *Duke of Wellington*, in 1961, as a protest against fees on public television.³¹

³⁰ Cohen, S. 'Sociological Approach to Vandalism', in *Vandalism*. Ward, C. ed. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1973. Pages 51-61.

³¹ Kempton Bunton's theft of the Goya portrait of *Duke of Wellington*, in 1961, constitutes the first theft of a painting from the National Gallery. He told the police he had done it to "draw attention to [his] campaign against pensioners having to pay the BBC licence fee." Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2011/aug/05/art-theft-duke-wellington-goya> [Accessed 5 Apr. 2018]

Who has not felt –in front of a frame, an urn of glass and the museum itself along with its scenography– the compulsion to take home a piece of art? Moreover, who, all of a sudden, has not had the desire to randomly change the order of some objects and modify the visual composition established by the artist and the institution?

At this point, I wish to recall a friend's story about a work of art exhibited at the MACBA.²² She explained that she had to restrain herself in order to avoid the consequences that would be imposed by the authorities in the room concerning a transparent bag filled with water placed on the ground. My colleague and her companion observed the bag, strongly repressing their desire to pounce on it and make it explode. In reaction to their fixation and their overtly expressed desire –we all know that a comment is a shout in the silence of exhibition halls–, the guard admonished them saying, “It's just a bag full of water.” Had that bag been placed in another space, the desire to make it explode would most likely have been considerably less significant. Jumping on it meant detonating the artistic jurisdiction.

If, in line with Eva and Franco Mattes, we understand that artworks are no longer closed up in boxes and that borders are permeable, we might deduce that –further from the material damage– the act of removing elements, rather than genuinely affecting the works of art, posits that they exist outside the museum dimension, within the millions of images, descriptions, citations and concepts circulating through our networks of communication (more or less public and more or less social).

Another anonymous testimony²³ affirms, ‘If the artist knew that his or her work –contemporary or not– had generated such emotion and need for the spectator to take an element of his or her artwork, that artist would be the happiest person in the world.’ Some would think that, nevertheless, when accepting that appropriating elements from artworks could be another modality of art consumption or (as others sometimes describe it) a way to release the experience of the works of art, spectators who remove elements or

²² MACBA (Contemporary Art Museum of Barcelona). Unfortunately, Sonia Fernández Pan cannot recall which work she refers to.

²³ *Radically Emancipated_Capsule 8 - Testimony 2*. (2011) [video] 2 min 17 s. Available at: <https://vimeo.com/73682567#at=0> [Accessed 5 Apr. 2018].



Radically Emancipated Capsule 12 – Security Guard Gustavo Abascal (2013) [video] 4 min 31s.

would like to play games, should –from the perspective of museum workers– be considered as sort of “art thieves”.

Fernando Dominguez Rubio, who has conducted ethnographic studies at the conservation laboratory of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, draws attention to artworks as ongoing and open-ended processes. While focusing on cases of contemporary works that are unstable, such as Eva Hesse’s *Expanded Expansion* made in 1969, or that will become technologically obsolete, such as *Untitled*, produced by Nam June Paik in 1993, he tries to demonstrate the importance of artworks as *qua* physical objects claiming their materiality.

Maybe it is also a sort of interest in materiality that drives certain audiences to affirm that a work of art would never gain value over time if its parts were constantly renewed; or that the aura of the artwork also grows with the accumulation of glances and incidents. Some would refer to Duchamp’s *The Large Glass*²⁴, which broke during a move and was restored by the artist

²⁴ The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even (or the Large Glass, as it is often referred to) was shattered while being returned from its first showing at the International Exhibition of Modern Art at the Brooklyn Museum. The damage was not discovered until the case was opened several years later and the work was eventually repaired in 1936 by Duchamp himself, who secured the pieces between two sheets of heavier plate glass clamped together by a metal frame. Available at: <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/duchamp-the-bride-stripped-bare-by-her-bachelors-even-the-large-glass-t02011/text-catalogue-entry> [Accessed 5 Apr. 2018].

himself, to the *Venus at her Mirror* by Diego Velázquez, slashed by Mary Richardson – a politically active British suffragist of Canadian origin.²⁵

I do not know if it was the aura or the fame that grew around the *Mona Lisa* painting when crowds of visitors gazed into the void²⁶ left after its theft, or the series of postcards that were printed of the lady visiting famous touristic sites²⁷ while the portrait was missing. Yet it seems as if artworks would never exist without a story concerning their afterlives; and all of us, as spectators, are part of this.

Bibliography

- Bennett, T. (1995). *The Birth of the Museum. History, theory, politics*. London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Berghe, R. (2012). *Erik el Belga. Por amor al arte: memorias del ladrón más famoso del mundo*. Barcelona: Planeta.
- Bourdeau, P. (1991). *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and Their Public*. California: Stanford University Press.
- Brahim, A. (2011). "Magnitude. The art of orbiting the public" in AAVV. *Composition of the Place II: Cardinal Audiences* (Eng.). Barcelona: Caja Madrid Cultural Space. pp. 100-101.
- Cohen, S. (1973). "Sociological Approach to Vandalism" in Ward, C. ed. *Vandalism*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, pp. 51-61.
- Campbell, K. (2011). *Her Museum*. Gallery text of solo show at Espai 13 - Joan Miró Foundation within the cycle *The End Is Where We Start From* 29/09/2011-13/11/2011. [pdf] Barcelona: Joan Miró Foundation. Available at: http://www.mireiasaladrigues.com/w/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Her-Museum_gallery-text.pdf [Accessed 6 Apr. 2018].
- Cavalucci, F. (2009). "Stolen pieces" in AAVV. *Eva and Franco Mattes. 0100101110101101.org*. Milan and New York: Charta Books, pp. 52-55.
- Dominguez Rubio, F. and Silva, E. B (2013). "Materials in the Field: Object-trajectories and Object-positions in the Field of Contemporary Art." [pdf]

²⁵ She tried to destroy the picture of the most beautiful woman in mythological history as a protest against the Government for destroying Mrs. Pankhurst, who was, from her point of view, the most beautiful character in modern history. She argued that justice was an element of beauty as much as colour and outline on canvas. 'Miss Richardson's Statement'. *The Times*, 11 March 1914.

²⁶ Darian, L. (2002). *Lozdaq in'F hZELZP aZn kluhi l NI 'Hf L'lg'* London: Faber & Faber.

²⁷ Series of *Mona Lisa* postcards printed after her disappearance (1911-1913), showing her fictitiously travelling around the world. Available at: <http://monalisadocumentary.blogspot.com.es/2010/09/boom-in-mona-lisa-postcards.html> [Accessed 6 Apr. 2018].

New York: Cultural Sociology. Available at:

<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1749975512473287>

[Accessed 6 Apr. 2018].

Dominguez Rubio, F. (2014). "Preserving the unpreservable: docile and unruly objects at MoMA." [pdf] San Diego: UC San Diego Previously Published Works. Available at: <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9qr4d9qx> [Accessed 6 Apr. 2018].

Fernández Pan, S. (2011). "Radicalmente emancipado(s) de Mireia c.

Saladrigues". Exhibition critique in *Esnorquel*: a critic experiment, partial and individual of cultural submarinism, 01.09.2011. Available at:

<http://esnorquel.es/radicalmente-emancipados-de-mireia-saldrigues>

[Accessed 5 Apr. 2018].

Hispano, A. and Pérez-Hita, F. (2011). "Notes on Theft as a Form of Dialogue with the Work of Art" in AAVV. *Composition of the Place II: Cardinal Audiences* (Eng.). Barcelona: Caja Madrid Cultural Space.

Darian, L. (2002). *Stealing the Mona Lisa: What Art Stops Us from Seeing*. London: Faber & Faber.

Rancière, J. (2009). *The Emancipated Spectator*. London: Verso books.

IT REPEATS ON YOU

Sarah Scarsbrook

Abstract

Artist-researcher Sarah Scarsbrook hosted an installation and discussion in response to the provocation *Artistic Research Will Eat Itself* featuring practice as research relating to ways of dealing with the self as entangled diffracted and inseparable subject and object of one's study. Included were, *ReCollected; Self-Reflective Analytic Drawings*, *Me-Mask & I; an Autopoietic Interview with the Self*, *Data-Roles; Conversations in Reams*, and *The Coding Cave and the Performative Fishbowl*; a film about process.

It Repeats on You



Figure 1. Installation view of *It Repeats on You*

Artist-researcher Sarah Scarsbrook's installation *It Repeats on You* for the 9th SAR - International Conference on Artistic Research included drawings, sound, objects and film, made through, of, and with her MPhil/PhD project: *The Artist and the Art School: Professionalisation in London Art Schools since the mid 1980s*. Scarsbrook's overall method is a hybrid approach that incorporates Grounded Theory (GT) and practice. This amalgam method has navigated across boundaries, diffracting practice throughout the rigorous recursive processes of GT. The qualitative data coding procedures of GT became necessarily infiltrated and intra-acted upon, as the traditional techniques were prised apart, opened up and spread out to include variegated practice as memoing modalities. The work presented in *It Repeats on You* are the culmination of these cogenerative processes.

As someone who studied at art school during this time, it was not without some relative self-interest that Scarsbrook's research was inspired in the first instance. Elements of self-reflexivity, introspection and the odd twists of naval-gazing unmistakably weave themselves through the study. *It Repeats on You* looks at some ways of dealing with the self as subject and object, as the observer and the observed, as a 'participant' in one's own research. Data and medium have merged, as the data generated has become her medium, and her artwork a form of data, inspiring and inspired by self-interviewing, data-dates and self-reflexive analytic drawings. Elements of continuous negotiation and comparison, are explored, along with saturated repetitious cycles, physical and emotional states, and the absurd, that stem from a journey of total immersion into data that is heavily interwoven with the self.

It Repeats on You therefore, was a 'regurgitation' of sorts in the form of an installation with a discussion on ways of situating the self in embodied research, hosted by the artist. The installation included; an exhibition of self-reflective analytic drawings derived from personal memory and analysis carried out on twelve interviews with art school graduates; a sculptural-sound piece playing a continuous loop of a self-interview that emanated from behind *Me-Masks* - masks made of the artist's face during her own art degree; hung reams of coded interview data that were utilised in the final cross-examination process of analysis; and a film of collated, cut and edited gestural and spoken memos showing meaning making through performativity in action. An introduction and discussion took place during the conference around how the work has aided Scarsbrook's ongoing approach to dealing with being an entangled and diffracted participant in, through and of her research.

The Artworks

ReCollected; Self-Reflective Analytic Drawings - Pencil on Paper

During interviews conducted for the study and throughout their analysis, images would appear in the form of flashbacks and would merge with the scenarios being described by the interviewee. Amid the intimacy and the analytic, Scarsbrook's memories, recollections and experiences of art school surfaced and became entangled with her analysis. These images created a feedback loop with Scarsbrook's own passage through art school. The drawings represent a combined recollected (or re-collected) narrative made through listening, coding, visualising, remembering, drawing, erasing and re-drawing. They are a form of visual analytic memo.



Figure 2. *ReCollected; Self-Reflective Analytic Drawings*

Me-Mask & I; an Autopoietic Interview with the Self - Sound Recording & Plastic Masks
Knowing she would interview artists, Scarsbrook carried out an interview with herself at the beginning of her study. The self-interview was an exercise in total self-reflection and an attempt to simultaneously unravel and piece together the tangled enmeshment of subject and object, of performer and audience, of interviewee and interviewer. The masks are objects made on Scarsbrook's Fine Art degree as sculptural forms and props to performance and painting at the time. Today they create a link between her current practice and her preoccupations at art school. The self-referential practice of feeding herself back into the research as subject and object takes on a meta feel, like a cyclical autopoietic feedback loop.



Figure 3. *Me-Mask & I; an Autopoietic Interview with the Self*

Data-Date; Conversations in Reams - Mixed Media

Part documentary display, part kinetic sculpture, the coded interviews are in their physical form in this piece. They were printed out and stuck together by hand onto cardboard rolls to become reams of data that could be physically interacted with for the axial coding stage of the analysis. The focus was on cross-examination and involved physical contact, interaction and interpretation that took place amongst the data in its material form. The physicality of the data became like an interactive kinetic installation with durational, performative and situated elements.



Figure 4. *Data-Date; Conversations in Reams*

The Coding Cave and the Performative Fishbowl - Film: Duration 9mins

Incorporating spoken notes and editing processes the film takes on the form of another kind of visual memo. Piecing together a narrative that shows the inductive processes at play in generating ideas through conceptualising, rationalising, repositioning and justifying, instead of being written they were voiced and gestured, either directly to camera or into Scarsbrook's mobile phone as voice notes. A triangulation between the conceptual, the self-reflexive and the absurd rub against one another as a representation of prolonged physical, emotional and conceptual immersion amid, on top and under the skin of the data.

Questions raised by the work centred around a number of key areas; the continuous level of negotiation that has been necessary to deal with the enmeshment of herself as both subject and object; the rationality of the repetitive and constant nature of the questioning, comparison and cross examination that comes with this type of analysis; ways of dealing with the emotional experience that stems from autopoietically feeding back into and out of the self; and what it was like to be immersively physical with the data in a self-reflexive coding fishbowl.

