

Actes du colloque / Proceedings

Association des commissaires des arts du Québec /
Association of Arts Curators of Québec

*Illumination : Symposium international sur le commissariat
des arts de la scène, une pratique à consolider*

*Envisioning the Practice :
International symposium on performing arts curation*

Sous la direction de / Compiled and edited by Helen Simard

**Colloque organisé par / Symposium organized by
Dena Davida & Jane Gabriels**

En collaboration avec la / In collaboration with the
Faculté des arts

Université du Québec à Montréal

Montréal, Québec, Canada

À / At L'Agora des science

10 au 13 avril 2014 / April 10-13, 2014

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Symposium Proceedings

« Envisioning the Practice: International symposium on performing arts curation »

April 10 to 14, 2014

Proceedings editor: Helen Simard

This international symposium examined the emerging practice of performing arts curation. Organized by the *Arts Curators Association of Québec* in partnership with *Tangente* and the *Faculté des arts* of the *Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM)*, “Envisioning the Practice” was held in Montréal (Canada) on April 10-13, 2014. Artistic partners *Studio 303* and *SAT. /La Société des arts technologiques* offered performance programming for this special event. An open call for papers in 2012 and 2013 resulted in ninety propositions, and forty-six were chosen by an international blind jury. Thirty-seven of these papers were submitted by their presenters for inclusion in the proceedings.

Over the last thirty-five years, numerous conferences, organizations, publications and graduate university programs have been devoted to developing the profession of contemporary visual arts curation. During this period, the concept of “performing arts curation” – a métier variously known as presenter, programmer, artistic direction, creative producer and cultural agent -- has previously been little discussed among practitioners. In 2010, a collection of texts entitled “Curating Performing Arts” was produced by *Frakcija Performing Arts Journal No. 55* in Croatia and, in spring 2014, the journal *Theater* from Yale University in the United States proposed the theme of “performance curators.” An initial meeting of artists and arts curators was organized in 2011 in Essen, Germany and called “Beyond Curating: Strategies of knowledge transfer in dance, performance and visual arts” was held with support from *Tanzplan Essen*. Additionally, a premier graduate certificate program, the *Institute for Curatorial Practice in Performance (ICPP)*, was inaugurated at *Wesleyan University (U.S.A)* in 2011.

Building on these events, “Envisioning the Practice” served to create further parameters and grounds on which to foster theories about the practice. This symposium brought together a wide variety of recent discourses on curation in all performance disciplines (dance/movement, music/sound, theatre/text-based, interdisciplinary, media arts, performance art and emergent practices) in order to enrich, structure and theorize possibilities of curating in these fields, with an interest in “best practices”. Curators (institutional, independent, artist-curators), artists, artistic directors, programmers, presenters, producers, arts administrators, art historians, art critics, scholars and university students proposed papers exposing various aspects of current practices in performing arts curation.

Les actes du symposium

« Illumination : Symposium international sur le commissariat des arts de la scène,
une pratique à consolider »

Du 10 au 14 avril 2014

Sous la direction d'Helen Simard

Ce symposium international examinait la pratique et les fondements théoriques du commissariat des arts de la scène. Organisé par Dena Davida et Jane Gabriels de *l'Association des commissaires des arts du Québec*, en partenariat avec *Tangente* et la *Faculté des arts de l'Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM)*, il s'est tenu à Montréal (Canada) du 10 au 13 avril 2014. Les partenaires artistiques locaux étaient le *Studio 303* et la *Société des arts technologiques [SAT]* pour la programmation de spectacles durant l'événement. Un appel ouvert à communications en 2012 et 2013 avait comme résultat 90 propositions de communications, et un jury international avait sélectionné 46 textes d'auteur(e)s de 13 pays. Trente-sept parmi ces présentateur(e)s ont soumis leurs textes aux fins de publication dans ces actes.

Depuis les 35 dernières années, de nombreux colloques, publications et programmes d'études issues du milieu d'arts visuels ont été consacrés au métier de commissaire d'expositions en art contemporain. Cependant, la notion de « commissariat en arts de la scène » — que l'on pourrait associer à l'appellation de diffuseurs, programmeurs, directeurs artistiques, producteurs créatives, agents culturels ou autres — a été très peu abordée dans les milieux concernés pendant toutes ces années. En 2011 une rencontre initiale d'artistes et de programmeur(e)s en arts de la scène a été organisée en Europe « Beyond Curating: strategies of knowledge transfer in dance, performance and visual arts » par *Tanzplan Essen* (Allemagne). En 2010, un numéro thématique sur le sujet a été édité et publié par le *Frakcija Performing Arts Journal* n° 55 (Croatie), et au printemps 2014 le journal *Theater* de l'Université Yale (États-Unis) regroupait des textes autour de la thématique « commissaires de la performance » (*performance curators*). Soulignons également l'inauguration en 2011 du programme de certificat en d'études supérieures, *Institute for Curatorial Practice in Performance (ICPP)*, lancée par la *Wesleyan University* (États-Unis).

En analysant les idées de praticiens et la recherche de théoriciens, les expériences de commissaires et d'institutions, ainsi que les pratiques d'artistes-commissaires, ce symposium rendra compte des principaux développements en matière de commissariat des arts de la scène (danse/mouvement, musique/son, théâtre/texte, performance, arts médiatiques, pratiques interdisciplinaires et émergentes). Il s'agit de proposer des paramètres qui favoriseront une évolution structurante de ce domaine, notamment par l'examen des « pratiques exemplaires » et des différentes approches novatrices. Parmi les 160 participant(e)s en assistance, il y avait des commissaires (institutionnels, indépendants, artistes-commissaires), artistes, directeurs artistiques, programmeurs, diffuseurs, producteurs, chercheurs, administrateurs d'art, historiens de l'art, critiques d'art, étudiants de maîtrise ou de doctorat. À partir d'une grande diversité de pointes de vue, les communications ont témoigné des enjeux associés au commissariat des arts de la scène et le développement de la pratique.

1. What Can Contemporary Art Perform? And then Transgress?

Emelie Chhangur, Art Gallery of York University (AGYU)

Abstract: This paper considers how one might develop new models of cooperation and collaboration through long-term, participatory curatorial projects. These projects evolve open-ended cultural encounters and create forms of institutional activism that have a longer-term impact than the time/space of the project itself. I will use *The Awakening/ Giigozhkozimin* by Panamanian artist Humberto Vélez as a case study.

Commissioned by the Art Gallery of York University (AGYU) in 2009, *The Awakening* was a large-scale, three-year collaboration between the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation and Parkour athletes that culminated in a public performance staged at the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) in 2011. I will explore how the issues and obstacles that arose through the process of creating *The Awakening* as well as the many negotiations, challenges, and barriers we crossed along the way, were often the moments where new ideas emerged or became instances that allowed for meaningful exchange.

In this project my curatorial role was to ‘set up’ or literally create the conditions that would enable this cross-cultural, participatory performance to happen and then respond to its perpetual flux as it developed. This involved managing personalities (and profoundly different cultural protocols and traditions, ways of working, etc), building and maintaining the precarious relationships between the two groups of collaborators, and brokering a relationship with the AGO.

Through this case study, I want to put forward a way of thinking about a curating as a choreographic practice that requires one's own movement. This kind of practice takes us beyond the traditional context of art and requires us to be moved by something that is not yet there while being sensitive to the subtle shifts and development of the collaborative process. This kind of movement requires that we be led by the project and stay open as it veers off into new directions, then deal with the consequences when this type of practice moves into the comparatively static art institution.

I will also discuss the affective potential this way of working can have on institutional practice. Three-years of working on this project meant overhauling not only the traditional ‘position’ of a curator but also the role an art gallery plays in the production of an artist's work. Here, the AGYU became an equal collaborator alongside the artist and collaborators. As such, institutional practices generally had to mirror the artist's own as well as specifically, in this case, follow Aboriginal principles and ethics. Applying these principles and ethics to the institution itself can transform the gallery from within, thus making the gallery itself the subject of critical engagement and activism—an idea that I call ‘in-reach’.

If every molecule in our body is made of dying stars, new constellations are in constant formation. New clusters of individuals, affected by positions-in-relation to other reborn stars appear every day. The unprecedented union of our bodies-in-movement—across time and space—can influence events yet-to-happen and bring new forms into the world. That is, if we are charged with enough of the right kind of energy. Ideas, after all, thrive in the motion of in-between things; the movement of the in-between can cause seepages that dismantle the structures once set in place to limit the flow.

For me, this notion of an in-between movement opening up new possibilities in static structures—for instance the art institution, to name just one—toward the promise of a not-yet-fixed future is a productively destabilizing position through which to envision what might constitute a choreographic methodology of the curatorial. For me, the choreographic is the practice of movement. To choreograph is to orchestrate the conditions that allow bodies to move unencumbered through time and space, and, depending on the score, to arrange or direct the conditions of that movement to produce a desired affect.

A choreographic curatorial practice then is a practice-in-movement that has the potential to seamlessly evolve aesthetic frameworks into social encounters. It is a dialogical practice that is brought about through sustained relationships created through collaborative working networks that set in motion relations between different people, ideas, and spaces where the brokering of divergent viewpoints, perspectives, and forms of artistic production is a central part of the curatorial work undertaken. It is in these volatile spaces-in-between relational moments that a choreography of the curatorial is set in motion.

To choreograph the curatorial is to mobilize those elements that encircle what has traditionally been considered the work of curators. But here the ‘putting together’, ‘the presentation of’, ‘the ephemeral moment’, ‘the spatial situated-ness’, and especially ‘the thinking through connections made by accident’ are interstices; for me, they are a means, but not a curatorial ends.

My own curatorial research over the past decade has taken place in close collaboration with artists using residency-style situations that often blur binary or hierarchical distinctions between artist and curator, audience and participant, and contemporary art and pedagogy. I am interested in the ways in which non-artists can be active participants in the production of artwork as well as be catalysts for defining new possibilities and references for aesthetics through the creation of performative and participatory situations.

Rather than making authoritative statements about themes, concepts, or art, my projects are often long-term, complex creations that result from intense working relationships with other people whereby the very process of *making* the project performs the ideas contained within it. That is, I learn from each unique situation and choreograph my curatorial approach from there. For me, the resulting form that a project might take is, by necessity, always connected to a set of interrelated activities that precede it.

Today I want to put forth a kind of curatorial practice that requires one's own movement; a movement that can take us beyond the traditional context of art and be moved by something that is not yet there while being sensitive to the subtle shifts and developments that guide participatory or socially engaged projects forward, staying open as they veer off into different, often unpredictable, directions and adapting to them.

Take for example a three-year project I orchestrated with Panamanian artist Humberto Vélez for the Art Gallery of York University (AGYU) entitled *The Awakening/Giigozhkozimin* in Ojibway. *Giigozhkozimin* brought together two divergent groups of individuals—members of the Mississaguas of the New Credit First Nation and a group of young Parkour athletes from the Greater Toronto Area in a collaborative performance that we staged at the Art Gallery of Ontario in May 2011. Through a series of gatherings, feasts, workshops, and organically developed skill-sharing sessions—that took place on the New Credit Reserve and at the Parkour Gym in downtown Toronto over the course of the three years of making *The Awakening*—the two groups slowly began to trust one another. Through working together to create a single project that we all had an equal stake in, we created a new kind of enabling through a real obligation to one another, even if it was, in the end, a performance. The many issues and obstacles that arose between the

two groups as well as between them and the institution—the ‘real work’ of working through’ this project—as well as the many negotiations, challenges, and barriers we crossed together along the way—were often the moments where new ideas emerged or became instances that allowed for meaningful exchange to happen. Crises and contradictions created permeability in the project that let outside influences seep into the project’s development, creating as well the possibility of addressing the notion of cultural complexity itself as a subject and as a strategy. This way of working also forced the commissioning institution to follow the path of the project’s collaborators, to learn how to problem solve differently rather than to impose a critical path of timelines and deadlines on the work being created. We had to learn other protocols than institutional ones.



In this context, curatorial practice is not designed to further the disciplinary knowledge of contemporary art, but rather to engage in different historical, social, and culturally submerged practices, and to work in relation to them, making sure that local knowledge, cultural protocols, and ethics not only inform the shape the project takes, but also the future practices of the gallery itself and the ways in which the individuals inside it work. This is a form of institutional transformation I have come to refer to as ‘in-reach’. By incorporating different kinds of cultural and aesthetic influences, different forms of social organization and economies, and differing cultural contexts and forms of expression *into* the art institution as a curatorial methodology, ‘in-reach’—which of course is positioned as the reverse movement of traditional ‘top-down’ practices of gallery ‘outreach’—is designed to transform the very nature and function of the institution from within, or from the bottom up. Or—in other words—to turn it inside-out from the outside-in. This is the social practice of curating that occurs in and through movement, a movement we initiate and then follow as a dynamic process of reciprocal relation.

Responding to the specific needs of individual artists and learning from the individuals and groups with whom I’ve worked (and quite often with whom I continue to work)—in particular those not considered part of the so-called ‘art frame’—for instance, begins first and foremost by changing the way in which the institution functions in relation to its programming: its so called ‘disciplinary management’. Taking on three-year projects means letting go of what traditionally has been a central goal of the contemporary art gallery: to produce exhibitions on a seasonal rotation with a three-week installation period followed by a static three-month exhibition where a public comes and views art-on-display. Incorporating new methodologies into the institution itself in order to change it from within takes time, and trust, and the commitment of the gallery staff, granting bodies, and administration (the so-called institution) *as well as* the individuals and groups we seek to engage in the process of this transformation (the so-called community), hoping that those same individuals and groups will continue to engage the institution in the future, only now on *their* terms and without binary opposition to/with one another. It means rethinking how the gallery views its own trajectory from a project-by-project timeline, to a seamless, ever-evolving entity where change is not always visible in spatial or representational terms. Choreographing of the curatorial means moving with the demands our projects instantiate and, through this, evolving our practices into new directions.

Over the process of *Giigozhkozimin*, it was important to incorporate into the gallery the world-concepts, protocols, and processes that originate in Aboriginal societies, as well as to adopt traditional modes of Aboriginal decision-making, with the goal of arriving at consensus through discussions that involved careful listening, equal opportunities to speak and be heard. It was crucial. Through this we arrived at a hybridization of methodologies that met the particularities of the project's needs without projecting onto the project's processual nature incommensurable teaching and learning practices, not to mention art world expectations of what participatory art should be and do. In the end, this project was about how cultural traditions are enacted not just staged.



Our ongoing negotiations over the three-years of working together revealed that *The Awakening's* significance lay in its process of becoming: both where we were going and, more importantly, how we were getting there. Acknowledging the differing forms of knowing that this process would take—from Aboriginal to institutional to somatic—was a first step toward

communicating with each other. Knowledge, in this context, was not what we already knew, for our frames of reference were so different from one another's anyway, but how we came to know our differences and our similarities when confronted by the challenges presented by this project.

These types of long-term projects aren't easy and they are often very emotional, exhausting, and full of contradictions, conflicts, and power dynamics as they have at their core something far more important at stake than just making art. They are about brokering new forms of social relations between individuals and groups who have differing concepts of and relations to culture, power, and to the art institution itself.

In the context of *Giigozhkozinin*, curating was a process through which the problems arising from the project could be inhabited and grappled; the problems actually were vehicles to access what lay beyond the boundaries: for instance the suppressed, unacknowledged, uninvited, and uncomfortable feelings that came with collaboration across generations and cultures. It was my role to deal with these things head-on not as an obstacle, but an integral part of actual project. As a Canadian, I was already implicated in the issues this work was bringing to the foreground and entrenched within those boundaries that could kept us from moving forward.

These boundaries—be they social, cultural, or economic—are not curatorial, they are systemic. In thinking through what might constitute a choreographic approach the curatorial, I want to think beyond curating in positional terms (i.e. power-relation terms). A choreographic form that engenders a curatorial act—that is, what brings things together in order to set things in motion through time and space—is what opens these 'boundaries' and these static systems up to dynamic potentialities. The opening up may not always be generative but it is always productive, its impact sometimes manifesting itself much later than the time-space of the actual project because the curatorial act has set something in motion beyond our control.

***Giigozhkozinin* (Performative Presentation of Project as presented at symposium)¹**

Faith Rivers, one of the members of the New Credit Cultural Committee, wrote to me in an email two days before the performance:

I am very overwhelmed with all the involvement the team has had with our First Nation and I just have to say Chi Miigwetch which means a Big Thank You in Ojibway.... I can feel people and I get good feelings from everyone on your team, thanks for that. I know it is a lot of work for you and I can empathize, just don't forget to breath ... on Saturday we can give a huge sigh of relief and say yes! We did it! (Rivers, email communication with the author, May 12, 2011)

Together, we had come a long way.

On the morning of 14 May 2011 in New Credit, Len Grant—the photographer who was documenting the performance—headed out by taxi to the New Credit Reserve at 8 am to document the Mississaugas' journey to Toronto for the 'big day'. When the Mississaugas arrived at the AGO we greeted them with tobacco ties made by the members of the AGO Youth Council.

Behind the scenes was complete chaos. Parkour were helping smudge boys as they put on moccasins while the young Mississauga women braided the parkouristes' hair. Some of the Elders were sewing and stitching, putting the final touches on the banner that had been made specifically for *The Awakening*. Around Walker Court, friends, family, and complete strangers gathered by the hundreds in anticipation of 'Toronto's ceremony'.



The performance began with a procession outside and the simultaneous preparation of the altar inside Walker Court. At the front doors of the AGO, where Philip Cote was blessing everyone with sweet grass, the gathering of fifty-plus Mississaugas, Tecumseh family members, the two youth councils, First Nation Elders, gallery staff, and young parkour athletes certainly was surreal. Curious on-lookers took photographs of this unlikely charged “political” image of contemporary Canada coming together in a new association. Inside, an Aboriginal Elder in full regalia, lighting a smudge pot, smoke rising upward in Walker Court, the smell of sweet grass filling the galleries, was an equally uncommon sensory and olfactory experience that disrupted the usual serenity of the AGO.

Following the Fire Spirit dancer, the Chief of the Mississaugas carried the Sacred Eagle Staff, followed by a representative from each of the youth councils carrying our banner. The Parkour, youth councils, Tecumseh family members, Mississauga dancers, and drummers maneuvered their way through the hall that snakes its way through the AGO lobby toward the Walker Court. With all the performers settled in position, a magical silence filled the space. Philip Cote, the Masters of Ceremonies, his voice echoing through the galleries surrounding Walker Court, announced:

My people will sleep for one hundred years but when they awake it will be the artists who give them their spirit back. This ceremony is our call for a new time. A time of understanding, respect, tolerance, unity, and imagination. We would like to light a new fire for the future, invoking the spirits of our ancestors. (Cote, script read during performance, May 14, 2011)

Halfway through the performance the audience was called upon to help the Aboriginals reach out to the spirits. The entire room, in unison, repeated the word “awakening” four times in Ojibway, the Mississauagas’ mother tongue.

Giigozhkozimin

Giigozhkozimin

Giigozhkozimin

Giigozhkozimin

Perched atop Frank Gehry’s massive snaking spiral staircase that towers over Walker Court, Parkouristes Dan, Shawn, and Gerome catwalked up and down the wide ledges of the staircase, their movements becoming more frantic as energy built toward a climatic peak. The time had arrived: the eagle descended in one fell-swoop from the staircase and joined the Mississauga dancers and the rest of the parkour in celebration. The spirits had heard our call! Elder Garry Sault thanked the Parkour-spirits by offering them tobacco. The spirits danced alongside the fire-spirits. And then the Fancy Dancer and Grass Dancer entered the circle to join in celebration.



After the performance, Elder Garry Sault explained what the parkour’s role meant to him, “They typified the spirits that are around us in our everyday lives but people don’t pay attention to them. So by calling to them, they appeared ... in full focus. We’re calling on the rest of humanity to come awake because that time is here” (interview with David Sharpe, May 14th, 2011).²

At the end of the ceremony, the audience was invited to join the circle of drumming and dancing. Everyone poured into Walker Court, almost trampling one another in their enthusiasm to participate in this unique celebration. Aboriginal youth taught strangers to powwow dance. Other parkour in the audience back-flipped off the high ledges.

After about fifteen minutes, over a loudspeaker, AGO staff asked everyone to leave. But no one left. All the participants were *so* proud. Everyone was crying. *The Awakening* struck an important emotional cord with Torontonians. It reminded them again of who we are as Canadians, a mix of so many different people, places, and traditions that *are* present across time as is marked by our current historical moment. Full of people from all different cultural backgrounds, ages, and abilities, dancing, drumming, and singing together that day, the spirit in Walker Court would never be the same.

Before the Mississaugas boarded the bus to return to New Credit, one of the young Mississaugas gave Humberto a sacred eagle feather: the highest honour one can receive from First Nations.

The Awakening had been for the people, not the institutions. For the parkour, the art institution was no longer a nameless, faceless entity that was off-limits. On behalf of all urban youth, they owned their presence at the official museum that day and felt validated by being allowed to be themselves there. “It was a really good opportunity,” Dan said after the performance was finished. “It was a bit scary going into it but after we got to know the Mississaugas, it was super positive. We’ve built a really good bond between us. It’s really opened my eyes about other people. When we first began, Humberto kept calling us artists, which I didn’t understand until right now.” Two days after the performance Dan text messaged me to say: “the [parkour] group got together yesterday and I just wanted to say that we *already* miss the project—A LOT!” (Interview with David Sharpe, May 14th, 2011).

The Mississaugas were tired of always only belonging in the historical section of museums and being kept in the past by ethnographers and anthropologists. Chief Brian LaForme said:

The performance sends a message to the people of Toronto that we're still here, our presence is still here and we're not going anywhere anytime soon. It's great to see, you can feel the energy here—the place has been transformed by us. (Interview with David Sharpe, May 14th, 2011)

Indeed, it was a historic event for everyone who attended that day, whether participant or audience. Maybe even for the AGO.



The Awakening restored the art gallery as a site for bridging communities and as a catalyst for defining national identities not as an authoritative representation but as an emergent moment.

The Awakening was not only about the affective possibilities of participatory art, however. Nor was it solely about the participants' experience during the process, or the audience's reaction at the performance. Taken together, *The Awakening* was about how Canadians could approach nation building in the future. As a "newcomer" to Toronto, on his very first site visit, Humberto said to me, "It's a Canadian legacy for the future that we need to

look into with this project” (personal communication with the author, August 9th, 2009). To this day, the collaborators are still in communication with the AGYU and each other. And Humberto is one of my dearest friends. Projects like these change those involved and those who bear witness to them. They don’t just end when the artist goes home: we continue to have an obligation towards one another. The enabling is the real purpose of these kinds of curatorial projects after all.

¹ The following section is an account of the original performance of *Giigozhkozimin* on May 14th, 2011, drawn from Chhangur (2013, p. 118-144).

² Several quotes in this section come from interviews David Sharpe, conducted with the participants on the day of the performance, May 14th, 2011, in preparation for his front page article on *The Awakening* for the *TEKA Times*, the official newspaper of the Mississaugas’ and Six Nations’ Reserves. Mr. Sharpe not only attended the performance, he followed the entire process, attending a number of the workshops in New Credit. While his expertise is not necessarily in contemporary art, his observations and editorial about *The Awakening* and the subversive potential of Humberto’s practice was more perceptive than those of other contemporary art critics who also covered the performance. Unfortunately, I do not have the original paper, as it only has a circulation of approximately two hundred copies on the reserve.

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Emelie Chhangur is an artist and award winning writer and curator based in Toronto where she works as the Assistant Director/Curator of the Art Gallery of York University. Over the past decade, she has developed a participatory curatorial practice in collaboration with artists. Her projects are often long-term, process-based experiments that culminate in performances staged in specific locations or scenarios.

Image Credits:

Humberto Vélez, *The Awakening/ Giigozhkozimin*, 2011. Performance documentation. Courtesy of the artist and the Art Gallery of York University. Photo: Len Grant.

2. Curatorial practices as counter-spaces: the expansion of a field

Elisa Ricci

Abstract: In this paper, I would like to explore curatorial projects in the field of contemporary dance and the performing arts as ‘undertakings’ that go beyond the presentation format. In the last ten years, practices have emerged based on collaboration between artists, theoreticians, curators, political activists and experts from different backgrounds. Based on the analysis of case studies from these emerging approaches, I will highlight specific tendencies that these practices have in common—for example, transdisciplinarity, dialogical approaches and process oriented methodologies—and their implications:

- 1) Process oriented methodologies imply the risk of failure, of producing non-entertaining results and therefore the assumption of a critical position towards market dynamics.
- 2) The overlapping production of curatorial and artistic meaning from the perspective of the performing arts makes it possible to help re-think the relationship of artist and curator as a dialogical space for the development of formats with an ethical regard for the fair sharing of responsibility and power.
- 3) Curatorial activities in the performing arts confirm a tendency towards transdisciplinarity in the curatorial field. This process of transposition can continuously destabilize existing institutional structures, actors, approaches and formats.

These practices generate temporary and collective spaces for work, research, exchange and presentation. They are concerned with practising hospitality, opening active counter-spaces, sharing responsibility and acting in a context-related way, as well as with the development of formats for a long-term transmission of curatorial knowledge. These observations lead towards a definition of curation as “ethical care” (Braidotti, 2006, p. 119), a responsible and sustainable practice aimed at bringing curatorial activities into a partnership with political activism and community building, which in turn implies a further expansion of the potential of the curatorial field itself.

Paper:

This contribution is based on two years of broad-spectrum field research for my M.A. thesis *Curatorial approaches—Dance—Choreography* at the Master of Dance Studies, Freie Universität, Berlin. My research focused on a period of time between end of the 1990s and today. I examined curatorial practices taking place in Italy, and in the international Berlin-based scene, where I am active as an independent curator of the performing arts. While maintaining my focus in these two places, I continued to seek perspective by studying other European and global examples. I gathered information through interviews, press articles, flyers and websites and through partaking in projects, festivals and formats as audience or actor. I outlined common features and tendencies among the case studies with the aim of envisioning a practice.

In the chosen period of time, the terms ‘curator’, ‘curating’ and ‘curatorial’ were increasingly used in the international performing arts field, both in English and in German, instead of (or as well as) terms like producer, festival director, artistic director, and dramaturge. This might seem a mere issue of labelling or terminology, although I would argue that the tasks, desires, needs and expectations of artists, cultural operators and audiences were changing in this time period. As such, the need to borrow a term from the visual arts reflected subsequent experimental approaches towards festival formats and a redefinition of professional fields.

I would like to begin by outlining two Berlin-based festivals, where the above-mentioned transposition of terms from the visual to the performing arts heralded experimentation and change. The first example is the *Performing arts festival—In Transit*, which took place biannually from 2002 to 2011 at The *Haus der Kulturen der Welt (House of the World Cultures)*. At the outset, the founders of the festival, curator/author Johannes Odenthal and artist/curator Ong Keng Sen publicly stated that their intention was to break the classical showcase format of the festival by integrating lectures, concerts and a creative laboratory process into the festival structure. I think the highly transdisciplinary editions curated by author/curator André Lepecki in 2009 and 2010 are particularly interesting: for example, with the help of dramaturge Silke Bake and artist Maria Jose Ariona, Lepecki managed to smuggle a white cube into the spatial core of the festival. In doing so, he transformed the space and time of the festival into a rhizome-like web of performative, dialogical, relational, visual and creative spaces involving artists, scholars, students and the audience.

For the first edition of *InTransit*, the term curator was used to define a position that had been heretofore called ‘festival director’ or ‘artistic director’. According to Ong Keng Sen, the choice of terms was connected with the need to introduce a process-oriented vision, to assume a more creative role, to bridge or facilitate the dialogue between various disciplines. The *Haus der Kulturen der Welt* was a very fertile terrain for this transdisciplinary transposition of terms, since the visual and performing arts departments share spaces, projects and concepts. *In Transit*, one of the first performing arts contexts in German speaking countries to adopt the term *curator* initiated an experimental approach towards the festival format.

The second Berlin-based case study I would like to outline is *tanznacht berlin*, a biannual event that started in 2000 as a one-night gala-showcase or a kind of art fair for the presentation of excerpts from the works of Berlin-based choreographers to cultural operators and general public. In 2004, however, the four-day festival *Tanz made in Berlin* altered the gala-show night by presenting entire works instead of excerpts. In the 2008 and 2010 editions, curator Peter Stamer sponsored significant further changes, completely de-structuring the festival format into a semi-workshop one. In 2008, beside the presentation of choreographic pieces as in the tradition of *tanznacht*, concerts, films and lectures were performed. Participative formats involving the public were also introduced: eight artists designed a temporary trailer park as intimate location for living and performing during *tanznacht*, in its new not-yet renovated industrial location, *Uferhallen*. Further, extreme experimentation occurred in the 2010 edition, which I will discuss later.

The term curator was used for the first time in the 2008 edition to describe a position that was until then referred to as ‘artistic direction’. The evolution of *tanznacht* reaffirms my perception that the introduction of the term curator in performing arts contexts goes hand in hand with drastic re-consideration and bold experimental approaches to festival format. Other Berlin-based examples also highlight this tendency, such as the introduction of the term curator to define the dance and theatre programmers at the well-known *Berlin theatres HAU* during the 2003-2004 season, when internal structural changes were happening and the practice of programming thematic festivals was introduced.

Besides the above-mentioned examples, there are numerous practices and projects in the field of the performing arts that have developed in the last fifteen years, which are characterized by collaborations between artists, theoreticians, cultural operators and independent curators. A review of a heterogeneous selection of these practices reveals a prevalent common feature: the development of temporary spaces for research, exchange, presentation and formation in the fields of contemporary choreography and performing arts.¹ These practices and projects are now ‘outperforming’, or more popular than, traditional festival formats. They question market dynamics, attitudes towards production and educational philosophies, at an institutional level as well as in the independent scene. In some cases, such as in the independent scene in Italy, artists

and operators act to compensate the chronic lack of institutional support and spaces for the presentation for the performing arts. For example, *Festival Teatri di Vetro* in Rome is just one of these many little Italian cultural organizations that make up a network of presentation contexts, which often take place in rehearsal spaces, off-spaces or in urban contexts.

The projects and practices mentioned above definitely carry curatorial features, whether it be on an organizational, conceptual, thematic, creative, spatial, relational, negotiation or administrative level. The makers of these practices and formats, however, often do not use the terms ‘curator’ or ‘curatorial’ to define their work. Sometimes, they even criticize this transposition of these terms—loaded with experiences from the visual arts—that are indeed related to the powerful and institutional role of the ‘star-curator’, and with the conflicting superimposition of meaning production at the artistic and curatorial level.

These practices and projects open spaces besides experimental festival formats, which and beyond known structures, hierarchies, approaches and deal with specific local conditions and difficulties. They represent an expanded dimension of the curatorial field, as Kate Fowle, curator at *Garage Moscow* and Director of *Independent Curators International*, writes in her contribution to the book *Cautionary Tales: Critical curating*: “We need to complicate the dialectics and acknowledge the diversity of practices that continue to develop around artists and their ideas. We need to start thinking in terms of an expanded field of curating” (Fowle, 2007, p. 54). This expansion of the curatorial field that Fowle outlines is taken further in the theoretical approach of visual art professor and theoretician Irit Rogoff, who differentiates between ‘curating’ and ‘the curatorial’, stating the possibility of letting the curatorial become “a mode of engagement in the world that cannot be anything but political” (2006).

To foster an expansion of the curatorial field in this direction, I would like to propose a definition of “care” from the field of ethics. I quote philosopher Rosi Braidotti who, in her books *Transpositions – On nomadic Ethics*, states:

Care entails qualities of attentiveness, responsibility, competence and responsiveness that can help construct better citizens, as well as making better moral agents. Care allows for neither neutrality nor distance and calls for self-reflection and constant reappraisals of one’s condition. In my language care is a

situated and accountable practice. Care is the key to social accountability and responsible citizenship. (Braidotti, 2006, p. 119)

The theoretic positions taken by Braidotti and Rogoff (2006) allow a definition of practices in the expanded curatorial field as politically responsible and rooted in local contexts.

Throughout my field research, I outlined some common aspects among the analysed case studies that confirm these theoretical approaches on an empirical level, such as (but not limited to): process-oriented approaches, focus on creation of dialogical and relational spaces, and a pronounced transdisciplinarity. These aspects allow me to affirm that the curatorial practices I observed embody the abovementioned theoretical positions and definitions. Process-oriented practices have to deal with a strong risk of failure, or with the risk of not being entertaining. They consciously include the ‘unexpected’, to once again borrow a term from Rogoff (2006). The decision to employ a strong, process-oriented-approach means to assume an embodied, critical position that becomes tangible in the experience of the process. The strength of dialogical, relational spaces is the same questioning and critical strength of process-oriented spaces.

Another connection between Braidotti’s (2006) theoretical position and the curatorial practices I observed and analysed through my fieldwork is a pronounced commitment to transdisciplinarity. Indeed, Braidotti defines transdisciplinarity as a pre-condition for sustainable standards:

We need to think the spaces in-between and their interconnection, without stopping at any one centralized concept: a nomadic style of thinking which is open to encounters with others—other systems of thought or thinking environments. The urgency of constituting these transversal alliances needs to be stressed as one of the pre-conditions for the quest of sustainable standards. (Braidotti, 2006, p. 161)

By opening critical and transdisciplinary artistic spaces, these curatorial practices become “situated” and “accountable”, and begin to approach Braidotti’s standards for sustainability.

Before coming to conclusion, I will go back to the edition 2010 of *Tanznacht* to illustrate one of many concrete examples of how a curatorial practice carrying above-mentioned feature

can become critical, sustainable, responsible and situated.² In an Interview that I carried out with curator Peter Stamer, he affirms that the concept for *thevillage.tanznacht* was created starting from the need of the Berlin-based international scene to make a step to become a community aware of the own political potential and strength (Stamer, interview with the author, December 2010). According to Stamer, *thevillage* was conceived as a questioning device towards the role and cohesion of the Berlin-scene. In this context, he chose to take a critical approach in order to deal with the responsibility and power-related task of inviting artists to festivals. Having been appointed curator of *tanznacht* by the responsible institutions, Stamer invited eight Berlin-based choreographers to participate in the festival. These eight choreographers were then invited to invite further choreographers to participate in the project, according to principles of shared responsibility set forward by the mandate of the festival. The result was a group of twenty-nine artists that worked together over the course of five weeks. This redistribution of the curatorial power and responsibility among all the artists—beyond the borders of the curatorial field—broke known hierarchical dynamics and transformed the process of inviting artists to participate in the festival into a critical instrument through a process-oriented, transdisciplinary and dialogical approach. The result of this experiment is that *tanznacht* moved away from the festival or show case format as in the tradition, resulting in a collective work-think-tank-research session that results in six participative encounters with the public.

At this point, it is worth to mention that *tanznacht* is supported by a special state fund provided by the German federal capital, and that this fund very much conditions the format in the sense that a public outcome is definitely a pre-condition to get support. It is not a fund for work, research or residency-like formats. The fact that the funded money was used to pay the involved artists a basic income over the five weeks of work and not a fee for a one-night performance presentation has required an important negotiation with the funding institution also considering the absolute lack of funds for residency programs in Berlin. Acting this way P. Stamer and the involved artists opened again a space of critical negotiation.

Choices like this allow defining curatorial practices as spaces of critical negotiation and of political engagement with sustainable standards, as what I like to call counter-spaces. They represent a change a break, being the field of institutional critique quite new for the performing

arts at least in Europe.

In this sense, to conclude, I would like to connect with the definition of everyday practice by Michel De Certeau (1998). For De Certeau, practices are mode of doing, ways of dealing with possibilities, a compound of ritual and improvisation, manipulation of spaces, development of networks and art of combining. He argues that practices result in the creation of spaces, and that spaces are stories. Connecting with this approach, I'd like to conclude by suggesting that curatorial practices can be seen as temporary spaces in continuous processes of linking and connecting, in tension between setting and improvising. Curatorial practices can, in this sense, represent a stage for rehearsing social changes; they can be seen as preparation rituals for social changes, while crossing borders, smuggling knowledge, daring new connections and giving spaces to support critical positions being therefore counter-spaces.

¹ Just to name a few of these organizations or events in the European landscape: *PAF—Performing Arts Forum* (initiated by artist Jan Ritsema, is an isolated location in France where artists and scholars meet for research and work); *Sweet and Tender Collaborations* (a network of young performing artists active in Germany who are questioning production and presentation dynamics, and organizing talks, discussions, and various presentation formats, such as *Treffen Total* in Hamburg in 2010); *Le Musée de la Danse* (an institutionally based, transdisciplinary and experimental project space for presentation, education, research, created by choreographer Boris Charmaz from inside a French National Dance Academy).

² It has been hard to choose which one of the very interesting projects I observed during my fieldwork I would share with you. In order to be concise and coherent here, I decided to use *Tanznacht* as an example, since I had already introduced the general context of the festival, even if doing this means I might be missing the chance to better represent the heterogeneity of this landscape.

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Biography:

Elisa Ricci is curator of dance and performing arts. Lately, she co-curated *Tanz! Coreografie Berlinesi* (2012); *Rehearsing Collectivity – Choreography Beyond Dance* (2011); *Performing Translation – Voci dall’Ombra* (2010). At the moment she is working on *c.a.r.e – curatorial approaches / realities exchange* a collective research on transcultural curating. Co-editor of *Rehearsing Collectivity – Choreography Beyond Dance*, ArgoBooks. She translates theatre and works as a dramaturge.

3. Noticing the Feedback: A Proposal to the Contemporary Dance Field, and/or This Revolution Will Be Crowdsourced

Michèle Steinwald, Independent Curator and Dance Producer

Abstract: When I asked a room filled with my peers to imagine an ideal future for presenting contemporary dance performances, they agreed on a set of qualities: a flexible space, a blurring of art and life, a place of abundance. In this utopia, everyone finds time to make art, has the freedom to explore, and opportunities to be challenged. I then asked what could a possible first step look like to create this setting, and I received as many different answers as individuals.

We have inherited spaces and protocols for arts participation. Artists who build ideological principles into the fabrication of their art, not just within the content of the finished production, are coming to the forefront of aesthetic contributions. I propose a process to identify new guiding principles based on community, dialogue, and empathy for the presentation of contemporary and experimental choreography.

Through the understanding of the underlying values produced by the works of select dance artists (Deborah Hay, Luciana Achugar, and BodyCartography Project), recommendations surface for evaluating the conditions embedded or presumed in the field of presenting dance. The practices at play are presently open to lovingly dismantle the traditional setting and restructure the residual effects to be present and ready for the future. Artistic boundaries have not been blurred they have been obliterated. We, as curators, are responsible to adjust and evolve accordingly. Where is our flexibility and collegial trust to reinvent the conditions in which we do our work?

In this research, the three artists/artist collaborations mentioned share the following overlapping values: they flatten hierarchies, honor individual contributions, build empathy between participants (artists and audiences), and generously offer new opportunities and choices for engagement. In order to mirror those philosophies on the presenting side, for example, what if empathy, in building and supporting live dance performance, was our goal? How would we promote and display performances differently? If we were to act intentionally with similar priorities, would we make different choices? “To me art is elastic. It can respond to many different demands made on it” (Van Dyke, in Kennedy, 2013, para. 15). Can curators be elastic and respond to many different demands?

When I asked a room filled with my peers to imagine an ideal future for presenting contemporary dance performances, they agreed on a set of qualities: a flexible space, a blurring of art and life, a place of abundance, a performance of life, a ridding of greed, intolerance and self doubt. Here, everyone finds time to make art, has the freedom to explore, and opportunities to be challenged. I then asked what could a possible first step look like to get to this utopian setting, and I received as many different answers as individuals involved. The answers pointed to

early education, shorter workweeks, new economic systems, arts integration, meditation, increased modes of perception. When I am in the audience, I feel the change that certain choreographers affect within their work. What they make on stage creates the change we were imagining. It is our turn, as presenter-curators, to initiate the conversation in order to shift our practice and support such efforts in social change off stage.

Ultimately, my aim is to create an environment for an in-person experience that provokes discussion and introspection. I imagine belonging to a community center, an atmosphere accumulated from multiple activities and needs being served at once, and this sets a framework in my mind to find a balance of offerings, opportunities, and coincidences within a choreographed, yet spontaneous environment for all participants—artists and audiences—to engage in.

It will take us time to identify the elements that shape a theatrical experience and evaluate each aspect for their inherent conditions on the live performance. I can think of many places to start: the admission process (e.g. ticket prices, seating tiers, front of house ushers, messaging, fluidity of the architecture, ability to meet one's needs within the ritual of watching a performance even before it has begun, order of events, curtain speeches, program notes and playbills), and marketing (e.g. invitations, preparatory language, the distribution of the invitation, translation of artistic inspiration, educational content, historical context, curatorial intentions, background, the inside story, the hook, the social network draw, the buzz, word of mouth, critical appeal, facts, logistics, the aftermath). As we begin to untangle the conditions in which to experience live art, how we ticket and tell the art's story determines the unspoken contract we make with patrons, and influences everyone's ability to embody confidence and commit to the invited exchange. I note the feedback whenever a pre-show curtain speech strikes a cord with the audience or a performance noticeably alters one's preconceived notions of the live theatrical interaction. As for inhabiting a new and potentially utopian landscape, theorist and activist Stephen Duncombe explains in an interview "the trick is to lead people out of what they know without simply replacing this old way of being, thinking, and seeing with a new one. You need to provide space for people's *own* imagination" (Duncombe, in Schultz & Peters, 2012, p. 103).

A healthy and thriving non-competitive environment needs activity in order to generate excitement. Tim Griffin, executive director and chief curator at The Kitchen performance space in New York City notes:

Now one of the predicaments I think (of arts generally) is that you see culture without community. It's not true across the board, but there's a lack of the kind of organic exchange where the audience produces the work that produces the audience—that sort of dialogue/dialectic—is largely missing. Often things are programmed from above, as opposed to rising from below. (Griffin, in Evans, 2012, p. 5)

From the Mayan calendar noting the end of the world as we know it to the Occupy Movement demanding new regulations and acknowledgment of the inequities on Wall Street, there is a collective global shift in consciousness and a cry out to reclaim our future. The destructive economic forces during these recent years of financial crisis have prepared us for a new narrative. Stripped of desires to follow a prescriptive path, our guiding principles are noticeably in question. Artists who build ideological principles into the fabrication of their art, not just within the content of the finished production, are coming to the forefront of aesthetic contributions. Hierarchical institutional containers are unnecessary to prove accreditation; labels limit experiential value and are often unwanted by audiences who assume being integrated into the whole. There is an urgency and potential creative freedom to conceive of future parameters and outcomes collaboratively, with the artists and audiences together. Our globally connected community is saturated with artistic options and perpetually plugged into endless online discourse. The public sharing of our personal contributions is able to unclutter the noise of these offerings through relationships. As constant consumers, we stop only for discovery and are energized by the potential for inspiration and renewal. There is a new dawn that draws from everything and everyone we know or have heard of, anywhere and at any time. Virtual boundaries have not been blurred, they have been obliterated.

We have inherited spaces and protocols for arts participation. Modern theaters have been traditionally designed to separate the audience from the art in an environment that controls light, sound, and temperature while framing the stage, disorienting the viewer in order to suspend disbelief. The ability to cut out the everydayness of one's outside life has been a perceived benefit to producing a world distinct from the one left at the door upon entering. In contrast,

architecture of engagement starts with the premise of a gathering place, with central meeting areas where everyone has the ability to participate, design experiences and openly share nature, wellbeing, inclusion, and compassion. “Architecture and urban design are social arts, that influence human actions and interactions... [and] can also be a catalyst for change, synthesizing emerging cultural values and weaving critical new strands into the urban fabric” (Taggart, 2012). How do we flatten the hierarchical aspects of proscenium theaters into venues sufficient for the participation desires of today?

As we offer dance performances as part of the commercial market, the language used to sell tickets often relies on providing some authoritative perspective from the host venue or reputable newspaper critic. The understanding of worth can alienate when trying to create a name brand for contemporary artists who have no name recognition. The top-down stamp of approval is no longer the selling point it once was with season subscriptions as a privilege to participate in the pre-selected offerings. When everything is accessible online for free, how can we continue to promote exclusivity and intimacy as a price of admission? There is no more substantial touring funding for artists to be distributed to new communities, we need new reasons to host an event. Communication is circular and has room to include all sides of the conversation. Currently our combination of marketing and architectural systems prohibit our bodily intelligence and curiosity to be engaged. As a point of entry, choreographers have started to solve these deficiencies by keeping lights on in the audience during the show (Deborah Hay), having performers enter from audience before walking on stage (Luciana Achugar), and starting to interact on stage before the audience is completely seated (BodyCartography Project)—taking the art experience one step closer to a more inclusive environment.

The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines the word ‘spontaneity’ as *a voluntary or undetermined action or movement*, and as synonymous with *naturalness, ease, uninhibited* and *unrestraint* (Spontaneity, 2013). How could those words become principles that establish a live art experience that is equally empowering for an artist as well as an observer/participant? This should be an embodied position for everyone regardless of ability; giving access determined by interest not privilege.

By closely reading and learning from the creative processes and performance practices of dance makers Deborah Hay, luciana achugar, and BodyCartography Project—artists of various generations and nationalities—I will propose new guiding principles for the presentation of contemporary and experimental choreography. Through discovery and comparison, the understanding of the underlying values produced by the dance works of these artists surface and provide us recommendations for evaluating the conditions embedded or presumed in the field of presenting dance. Through the resulting conclusions, I hope to make an urgent field-wide suggestion to collectively examine our practices as a timely endeavor to maintain synchronicity with these artists' works and those of the future.

Deborah Hay – Community

From the earliest point in her career to now, Deborah Hay has always immersed herself in community. She started in the 1960s within the art community known as the Judson Dance Theater, in New York City, drawn together around the teachings of Robert Dunn, inspired by John Cage and committed to weekly performance and dance experimentation at the Judson Memorial Church in Greenwich Village. Later when she left Manhattan in the 1970s, it was to live off of nature in Vermont in a communal land-sharing cooperative with other like-minded choreographers and artists. It was at that time, when she began her lifelong research into the solo form. Only, in order to tour dance works and pay her portion of the bills, as solos were unpopular and dance companies were expensive to maintain, she developed a system of performing her *Ten Circle Dances*, published group choreographies, by being in residence in a community with nothing but herself and the choreographic instructions. She would arrive in a new location and lead anyone who wanted regardless of training to perform on the spot. In the end there would be no audience, simply and purely participants.

Over the years, Hay evolved her research practice from teaching large group choreography with untrained dancers over long periods of time and distilling those laboratory workshops into her solo choreography to providing a communal commissioning platform for multiple dancer/choreographers. Participants in the platform receive a solo choreographed by Hay during an intensive retreat with subsidies crowd-funded from each of their unique communities. The latter, called the Solo Performance Commissioning Project, ran for fourteen

years annually ending in 2012. The participants pool their resources and collectively invest to purchase the rights to perform one of Hay's solos. They leave the ten-day retreat to return to their home support systems, enriched by Hay's coaching and group facilitation, and encouraged by a new network of peers and potential partnerships for future shared performance opportunities around the world.

Hay has developed several strategies to disseminate her dances to generations of dance makers through community-building support systems that expand the visibility of her works throughout the world. She employs deliberate language with rich word-based choreographic directions and has generously 'dis-attached' herself from vetting the final product of a commissioned solo by passing along the tools necessary to facilitate the authorship of the solo to its new owner. Hay eloquently establishes the methods for fulfilling her choreographic scores for each individual dancer who commits to her working conditions. In the words of Britain's Independent Dance co-director Fiona Millward, Deborah Hay's choreography is riddled with "antidotes for habits that no longer serve you" (Millard, in Edmunds, 2013). Hay wishes to give each performer the tools necessary to prepare them from inside the performance of the work and from the outside within their community in order to share the choreography in performance.

Her constant grassroots efforts to provide platforms for her performances have created peer networks of artists interested in her radical practices, establishing a safe environment for experimentation and research. Hay is a generous teacher and strategic organizer who has received several awards throughout her career. In 2007, when honored with a BAXten Award, choreographer Juliette Mapp presented Hay by recognizing her contributions:

Your experimental work has remained alive and contemporary over four decades, inspiring your colleagues and peers and now - new generations of choreographers and performers. Your sustained commitment and your willingness to change course provides an example for others. Your articulate writing on the body and dance has had a profound impact on the field. (Mapp, in Faires, 2007, p. 26)

Her lifelong process of creating art works in community has strong repercussions: individual empowerment, synergistic resourcefulness, liberation from/subversive of main

systems of dance dissemination and distribution—all embedded into every cellular inch of her artistic contributions.

BodyCartography Project – Empathy

Building off of community (the macro) to reveal the individual (the micro), sourcing the choreographic material for performances through improvisations and somatic research conducted in the studio with their dancers, Olive Bieringa and Otto Ramstad of BodyCartography Project have made the idiosyncratic results of their explorations the aesthetic of their dances. Somatic training techniques (specifically Body-Mind Centering©) nurture the whole person, from their place in society to the internal bodily systems that keep them alive. Often used by dancers to strengthen their alignment and prolong their capacity and career, somatically-sourced movements reveal relationships between the physical, the cognitive and the emotional landscapes in all of us. This inside-out generative method facilitates empathetic responses in the viewers whose mirror neurons record the visual experience as their own. Unlike viewing great feats of athleticism such as acrobatics or ballet, somatic vocabulary is amplified to a potentially unrealistic state in performance but ultimately stems from a common ground. For BodyCartography Project, tapping into presence is placed above external form; the performers must show up in an authentic manner each moment of the live performance, being vulnerable to their surroundings and receptively spontaneous with fellow performers and audience members within the framework of the piece.

The embodiment of movement vocabulary in dance research, development and performance has a profound communicative quality. By using shared choreographic prompts in rehearsal, performers develop bonds with one other as well as a deeply felt personal experience. Within somatic training philosophy, the body is never objectified but instead is appreciated for its emotive capacities which “illustrate... that human experience is multifaceted and reveals itself in complicated twists and turns that constantly spiral back to pick up new information” (Miller, 2011, p. 266). It is through actions that the dancers excavate their experiential consciousness and offer this awareness as the conduit to movement inhabitation. The felt reality of the somatic body in motion summons many senses in the viewer’s own body and that experience and energetic response can recall magic. Artists like Bieringa and Ramstad who privilege the body’s

intelligence over structural and choreographic hierarchy are more able to break compositional rules by following the natural narrative derived from the performers' organic presence with knowledge and acceptance of all their multiple meanings and significances.

Somatic training also creates a heightened state of perception. The bodily awareness extends to the surrounding environment and performers establish a gaze that invites being observed. This behavior encourages the audience to actively participate in directing their focus on aspects of the performance, from the angles in body shapes to the pressure of weight being transferred in locomotion. Along with this attention to viewing, the observer removes judgment from their experience while being acutely aware of the information being shared in the moment. Viewers are able to bring their whole selves to the experience during performances as they become engaged with the dance material live.

Somatic influences also propose that audiences remove the assumptions they carry into spectatorial experiences. This ability to refresh ones expectations prior to a performance brings everyone inside the shared moment. This preparedness translates to creating a whole of the entire performance: audience members, performers, architecture, reactions and sense of time. By raising the awareness of movement patterns and opening up possibilities, new choices are offered as potentially more effective communicators. The elasticity of the entire creation as it encompasses everything unifies us and validates our individuality. This is how the spiritual, a powerful connection that remind us of our humanity, can reenter our busy lives. Inclusive behaviors are exercised by establishing a creative practice based in somatic techniques. Transitions in life are more apparent. Life is more fluid and theater more real. When somatic awareness is woven into the fibers of a performance, the creative process strengthens the community within the cast of performers. As such, their awareness of the audience expands this community and feeds energy back to the cast in performance. Their movements and actions reinforce the empathetic feedback loop and the logic within the performance is shared and ultimately, understood.

luciana achugar – Dialogue

Originally from Uruguay, luciana achugar came of age during the downtown boom in New York City's contemporary dance scene when emotions and exhibiting pleasure were disregarded in favor of complicated dispassionate choreography. Today her choreographic research and performances are rooted in the body's ability to feel pleasure and create sensations. Expanding these notions in order to build a palpable connection with the audience is one of luciana achugar's primary concerns. When coaching her dancers, she immediately reminds them of the potential the audience brings to the art form. The dancers rehearse in a true state of feeling and sensing so that viewers are able to pick up on the felt sensations brought to life on stage.

The beginning of each choreographic work starts with a conversation between achugar and her dancers. In response to her Marxist upbringing, achugar, a self-proclaimed labor equity supporter, feels it is necessary to be completely transparent about the financial opportunities and limitations for the current production. She treats herself and each of her dancers equally, taking into consideration their needs and contributions in the creation of the work. She deliberately has chosen to work with all-female casts in reaction to the dance field being flooded with women while disproportionately males are favored in dance productions. By choosing women as collaborators and the female form as the vehicle of investigation, she provides more opportunities to women and reclaims the feminine as a site of productivity, sensuality, and creativity.

By establishing a fair working environment, the labor and equality of her dancers' rights are at the forefront of the choreographic material in achugar's performances. The privileging of each of their contributions to the dance, the spirit of collective consciousness achugar promotes includes the audience as they become part of the live experience of her dances. Unifying gestures, whether it is unison movements, identical factory uniform smocks, repetitive actions, and ritualistic energies, explore the individual within a community. As she explores what is universal, each of the dancers becomes more distinct and valued as a unique contributor to the whole.

Her working relationship elevates the female and flattens the single-choreographer company model. Strategies from within her group choreographic works to date have involved the audience in the final productions by sharing verbal cues that the dancers are inhabiting, inviting the viewer to imagine those same motivations, by moving through the audience not just in front of but between and behind the audience, using ritualistic repetitious movement sequences that establish patterns and that are useful in engaging the viewers by revealing the logic of the composition.

The boldness she demonstrates with her determination around expression of emotion, exposing female distinctiveness on stage, does not diminish the innovations of the artistic rigor or her directorial contributions. It is selfless and courageous to present such fragile states of being in performance in the earnest and optimistic fashion that is her calling. She has created choreographic structures for her performers in which their vulnerability is never a liability but a true strength and vehicle for dialogue. This felt generosity is palpable to viewers and can lead to new appreciation for meaning as Deborah Jowitt, *Village Voice* dance critic notes, “If I were to cede my ability to construct a sentence and moan my way down the page in syllables, I might better convey the visceral response [achugar’s] work induces” (Jowitt, 2010, p. 2). Without removing the performance from the venues where they exist, achugar has heightened the connection of those involved by developing vibrational movement language, compositional phrasing with transparent motivations, and inclusive and equitable practices inside the rehearsal process to prepare for the stage experience.

A Proposal

Through dance we learn to become sensitive to movements, nuance, and subliminal body language. Performance and dance artists who acknowledge observers as willing intellectual, emotional and spiritual participants, and who invite audiences to be an extension of the performance itself start their creative process with the audience’s potential in mind. By defining a value system above their form, their creative foundation finds aesthetic solutions to move their political priorities forward. Their hope is to communicate intentions and perform an interdependent world. Dance’s gift to us is the deconstruction of any Cartesian notions, the reassimilation of our mind and body connection and its inherent intelligence, and an embodied

wholeness. Dance is a body-centric art form, which fundamentally aspires to join physical and energetic exchanges between humans. Bodies in movement create tones and textures. The space around the dance provides tension and landscape. Audience members are somatically inclined to receive meaning in proximity to actions. Within the role of curator, the field of presenting contemporary and experimental dance is open to a new heightened awareness and reevaluation of the best practices we have inherited and are currently employing to bring dance to a public. We have started to embrace a new sense of discipline and questioning of the terms that were constructed long ago. We have identified opportunities to support the live experience with external methods to engage dance audiences. Now it is time to evolve our practice to be inspired by the works of the artists we hold true and create supportive structures from the inside out, starting with the art.

From inside the performing arts presenters' circle, what we are asking of ourselves and for others is to join in, to collectively imagine and discuss new approaches ensuring the livelihood of the art forms we serve. The practices at play are open to lovingly dismantle the traditional setting and restructure the residual effects to be present and ready for the future. As Nicolas Bourriaud writes:

In order to invent more effective tools and more valid viewpoints, it behoves us to understand the changes nowadays occurring in the social arena, and grasp what has already changed and what is still changing. How are we to understand the types of artistic behavior shown in exhibitions held in the 1990s, and the lines of thinking behind them, if we do not start out from the same *situation* as the artists? (Bourriaud, 2010, p. 11)

New leadership in the arts speaks differently about innovation and risks. Recently Tim Griffin was interviewed and he mentioned, “that a lot of folks across the board are increasingly aware of the conventionality of their endeavor, of fitting the models that exist. And you can’t just conceive of the inconceivable. You have to take a gamble, to allow that possibility to exist” (Griffin, in Evans, 2012, p. 5). Imagination is an active pursuit and needs to be exercised. There is no discovery without the acknowledgement and willingness to fail. Health and wellness language is being cultivated and appropriated in the business world. Researcher and TED Talk sensation Brené Brown (2012), who has made breakthroughs digging around personal psychology to find the root of shame, explains that the birthplace of innovation, creativity and

change, is vulnerability. According to Brown, the only thing that cures shame is empathy. It is time we let go of the past and move forward together into the future of performing arts integration and collective personal growth.

I believe a boundary-ridden escape from daily grind, using a variety of tension creating devices such as existing architecture and invented instructions, could set the stage for events to layer within an environment. Now how can a space become tactile? How can a room be anthropomorphized? Works should not necessarily neatly fit into the settings they are performed in. Opportunities and limitations can become clearer in awkward placements and participation more obvious, while edges become softer potentially. Vantage points must be various: can greater distances expose patterns and increase insights into the craft, while proximal immersion lead to reflexive transformations?

Intellectual perspectives must be considered too, from the deliberately informed to the happily empty-minded. New York's MOMA PS1 curator Peter Eleey defines his process of working with artists as a consideration of:

What kind of curator they need me to be. I try very hard not to have a particular style. It's a process of paying very close attention to someone and intuiting things about that person—from the time you spent with them, from the work that you know, from what you know of them over time—and trying to figure out how to be a conduit for the best public presentation of their work. (Eleey, in Braverman, 2012)

Eleey's articulation of starting from nothing and being open to being informed from the individual artistic processes is a clue. Acknowledging the use of intuition as a tool in the curator's arsenal also brings us closer to strengthening the empathetic potential in public dance performances. In a recent *New York Times* article about socially engaged art, the Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts' director Kristina Van Dyke remarked, "To me art is elastic. It can respond to many different demands made on it" (Van Dyke, in Kennedy, 2013, para. 15).

Where is our flexibility and collegial trust to reinvent the conditions in which we do our work? Building off of Nicolas Bourriaud's (Bourriaud, Pleasance, Woods, & Copeland, 1998) concept of *relational aesthetics*, could an existing environment be accommodating so that it is

“the actual event that curates the work, not the other way around” (Ethridge, 2006, para. 11). According to Mathias Augustyniak of the design duo M/M (Paris), “there is no such place called art or culture but it’s all interwoven” (Browne, 2007). Could flattening the hierarchy between performances, art works, and creative interventions of different production scales enable interchangeability between audience and performers and solidify a cultural integrity?

Invitational language needs to consider and be designed to encourage social encounters, with innuendos that heighten senses and activate one’s curiosities. Time that stretches around syllables and sharpens to find moments to wander and wonder will interrogate from the inside out and discover from the outside in. According to Hamilton-Baillie), “When we are talking about complex communication between two people—inter-human situations—everyone knows that the more indirect communication is, the more effective the message”, (Hamilton-Baillie, in Ethridge & Tarlow Morgan, 2006, para. 20). Artists who value and prioritize generous layering of meaning inside their works and invite us in cellularly and spiritually, affect change physically. The musician and poet, Michael Stipe shares:

It is my belief that memory is our only real contribution to the universe after our death. Our memories, however banal or meaningful, gathered throughout our lifetime, go on to become the fuel, the powers the energy that allows the universe to be as vast and as fantastic as we imagine it is. (Stipe, 2012)

Muscles in our bodies contain our memories. Dancers tap into the potency of movements. Everyone’s body is the antenna to understanding movement in conversation, in film, on stage. Our mirror neurons bring a dancer’s embodiment of space, time, actions, and shapes directly to the audience and our past is released from watching their execution in the present. Our civilized society has placed barriers and doubt in our cellular comprehension of bodies in motion. Bringing back an embodied permission of full consciousness as an observer will bring acceptance in this world as understanding the complexity of our very human nature is innate in tuning into the frequency of dance. Outspoken and ever-evolving choreographer Tere O’Connor confirms that: “choreography eschews singularity of meaning by its very nature” (O’Connor, 2012, p. 12), arguing that at the end of the day, what are we left with are our experiences. Eley continues to explain what concerns him about curating is that, like a dinner party, “there is nothing left” (Braverman & de Villeneuve, 2012). He adds:

Like a dinner party where you hope that it is a great dinner party and you have seated everyone well and the conversation is lively, but at the end of it, apart for some dirty dishes, there is just what people remember from that evening... [that] goes back out into the world. (ibid)

When we turn to ourselves to be present, we also commit to finding the solutions together. Science is mapping empathy, artists are tapping into this understanding, and we are responsible to adjust and evolve.

I imagine future performances that are as small as a thought and as big as the sky, and with no hesitations. That there would be time to reflect with drifting layers and artistic options bumping into one another, just as there should be no real obstacles in life. Brown states:

Vulnerability is courage. It is about the willingness to show up and be seen in our lives and in those moments when we show up, those are the most powerful meaning making moments of our lives even if they don't go well, they define who we are. (Brown, in Tippett, 2012)

As audiences show up and participate, make meaning, and lasting memories, we too need to be present to experience the work we do in order to feel the meaning and execute the needs of the art works in public presentation. It will be messy and crystal clear all at once. We need to do this work together. "Making manifestos engages the thinker-practitioner; and in this sphere, the thinker-performer is by no means a contradiction in terms. Art and thought are not incompatible after all" (Danchev, 2011, p. xxvi). So I hope this revolution will be thoughtfully embodied, vulnerable, communal, and crowdsourced, for our "contemporary condition of overabundance" (Braverman & de Villeneuve, 2012) needs curation and we can't do it on our own.

The three artists and artist collaborations discussed in this paper share the following overlapping values: they flatten hierarchies, honor individual contributions, build empathy between participants, and generously offer new opportunities and choices for engagement. In order to mirror those philosophies on the presenting side, for example, what if empathy, in building and supporting live dance performance, was our goal? How would we promote and display performances differently? If we were to act intentionally with similar priorities, would we make different choices? By focusing on and researching artists who consciously and intuitively create systems and strategies to engage their audiences, what are our responsibilities

and opportunities to do the same? Artists lead rigorous creative research established through choreographic choices. With that knowledge accessible, how can the conditions to present dance to publics mirror the artistic intentionality that goes into the development of a choreographic work? Could they be customized to match? Language's expressivity can extend not only the invitation to watch but also the effect of experiencing the artwork. It is time to take advantage of the choices and opportunities a presentational platform gives all of us with these artists as our guides.

I challenge us to ask these questions and start from the art works, using the tools we have available in new ways. What if empathy was our goal? How could the meanings of the word *spontaneity* become principles in which we establish a live art experience that is equally empowering for an artist as well as an observer/participant?

I personally promise to embody my curatorial practice with these priorities and engage in conversation with my peers from this day forward. As I perceive abundance and opportunity, my approach changes. I engage my field as a whole being. I pledge to perform this shift in consciousness until it reveals new methods.

Additional remarks:

Americans for the Arts' Arts Index, a searchable website database which tracks arts participation by districts and calculates corresponding findings in order to anticipate the needs of the arts in every community across the nation, released the 2012 report in which the data confirmed the trend that more people want to be personally engaged while experiencing the arts and increasingly consume arts via technology and value diversity. Audiences are still very much committed to the arts and cultural experiences however are avoiding traditional models of delivery (artsindexusa.org). On the *Arts Index blog*, Stephanie Riven (2012, para. 6) calls our field to collective action:

After reviewing the long list of downward trends provided by the Index, we as arts leaders need to create a new list that expands the core strategies [**setting and communicating a vision, developing Collective Impact as a core strategy, and establishing a commitment to community**] to include the following:

- Putting aside our own agendas and our individual needs to be the authority in the room.
- Taking more steps toward visionary and innovative thinking at the national, state, and local level.
- Acknowledging that “survival” is not enough.
- Taking risks to avoid the status quo.
- Making a commitment to continuous dialogue.
- Seeking collaborative learning experiences geared towards new options and potential for our sector.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to my classmates at Wesleyan University’s Institute for Curatorial Practice in Performance (class of 2013).

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Biography

Michèle Steinwald, ICPP graduate, is currently an independent curator and dance producer. She has managed performing arts projects and professional development programs for On the Boards (Seattle), New England Foundation for the Arts/National Dance Project (Boston), DanceUSA (DC), and the Deborah Hay Dance Company (Austin). She worked for the Walker Art Center (Minneapolis) from October of 2006-2013 as Assistant Curator for the Performing Arts.

4. “Cognitive Dissonance” and Performative Diversity in Spoken Word Performance and Curation

David Bateman, PhD

Abstract:

The term ‘Spoken Word Artist’ refers to and encompasses all artists/poets working in the oral tradition. This includes: jazz, dub, hiphop, sound, slam, folk, mystic poets, and storytellers. It emulates the beat of the street. Spoken word includes the body, as memory vessel, and resonator... Sheri-D Wilson, *The Spoken Word Workbook* (Wilson, 2011, para. 5)

How then to select artists for specific festivals, conferences, events, spoken words series with this wide-ranging notion of the body as vessel and resonator? Drawing from over twenty years of experience presenting at and curating for spoken word events, the paper will examine ways in which diversity can be effectively included and addressed in workshops, festival presentations, and the creative process in general.

The presenters, using a variety of cultural and performative models in their own work, ranging from Nina Simone, to Puccini’s *Madame Butterfly*, Tammy Wynette, and Jackie O, will negotiate race and gender in their paper. Utilizing the work of Frantz (1967) as a departure point for their own individual and joint efforts to present work that challenges particular problematic core beliefs, the paper will look at performativity and how it can effectively respond to cultural concerns in provocative and challenging ways that relate to Fanon’s notion of “cognitive dissonance”.

Sometimes people hold a core belief that is very strong. When they are presented with evidence that works against that belief, the new evidence cannot be accepted. It would create a feeling that is extremely uncomfortable, called cognitive dissonance. And because it is so important to protect the core belief, they will rationalize, ignore and even deny anything that doesn't fit in with the core belief. (Fanon, 1967, p. 194)

A diverse range of cultural theorists, performance artists and poets (e.g. bell hooks, June Jordan, Sheri-D Wilson, Allen Ginsberg, Coco Fusco, Guillermo Gomez Pena) will provide elements of poetry, performance and spoken word that will be examined in an attempt to reveal effective methods for selecting and presenting diversity among a wide range of performative poetic forms.

Curating Queer: “Cognitive Dissonance” and Performative Diversity in Spoken Word Performance & Curation

As a queer White male—what’s queer? I used to be gay, then I flirted with bisexuality, but it refused to flirt back, so I went back to gay, but then I got a bit of attention as bisexual in my performance piece I WANTED TO BE BISEXUAL BUT MY FATHER WOULDN’T LET ME

where I roller skated in a patio umbrella dress and stuck a GI Joe up my ass as a kind of anti-imperialist military metaphor against all kinds of colonization—that went well so I went back to flirting, with everyone—sometimes I’ve been a drag queen, so that made me straight, but only when I had sex with heterosexual men, who were a bit queer, so now I’m back to queer, and just the other day I changed my gender status on Facebook to ‘neither’ because there was no option to say ‘both’ and even ‘both’ doesn’t work because gender and sex choices can’t be limited to two or three or four or more, it’s like when transgender activist performer Kate Bornstein once said to me in an interview, gender is like geometry, many geometric planes to play off of, a limitless array... so why can’t I get a god damn date?! Or an arts grant. I do get some. You know, it’s all kind of like my history of Canada Council funding. First I was a theatre artist, then I was interdisciplinary, then I was inter-arts, then I was performance art, then I was spoken word and storytelling, now I’m stuck between storytelling and literary performance when what I really am is just a frustrated self obsessed storytelling standup comic who can’t get a gig on the comedy channel and can’t write a poem under ten minutes to save his own life. But I’m also a disability artist with HIV so I am spared the job of saving my own life. ODSP (Ontario Disability Support Program or Old Desperate Sexual Pervert) will save it for me. What am I? I’m queer! And I also flirt with curation. So then, at the end of the day, as I approach sixty, in my limited, reiterative, and heartbreaking experience—and when I say heartbreak I mean the celebration of and the recuperative joy sought and gained through revisiting trauma and working through it in poetic form—in the context of this kind of happy-go-lucky fragmented experience, there has been a tendency, particularly amongst the relatively stabilized identities of some straight white men, some of whom I have slept with, to doubt the parameters of my early trauma as a very young queer artist/subject during the nineteen fifties, sixties, seventies, and beyond in predominantly White southern Ontario. Responses such as, “there must have been some opportunities for you in high school, in theatre, in art”. Yeah right, they were really going to let me play KoKo or Yum Yum or Nanki-Pooh in the Mikado and sing ‘titwillow’ in my deranged falsetto? I don’t think so! Very early on in a conversation of this kind I find myself referring indirectly to what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has called *the open mesh of possibilities*: “gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of anyone’s sexuality aren’t made (or can’t be made) to signify monolithically” (Kosofsky, 1993, p. 8)—these variant and undefinable categories of queerness

that embrace yet move beyond and into further trauma based memories that cite extreme effeminaphobia as being part and parcel of the vast fragmented category that we have come to call queer.

Therefore, as I approach sixty, having achieved a certain amount of comfort in a body that continues to be betrayed by social and cultural categories and univocal assumptions about who I want to have sex with, having spent almost thirty years reiterating, in spoken word, the memory of particular effeminaphobic experience, I insist upon skepticism and constant revision as a constant artist and an infrequent curator of ‘queer’ literary based events.

At a recent spoken word festival I was asked to host, in drag, an evening framed by the title ‘Edgy Women’. I was simultaneously flattered, delighted and skeptical about the curator’s choice of me, a biological male, to take on emceeding duties that would introduce the work of three biological women. Was the category being skewed with the addition of another layer of gendered identity—in a sense a triple, even quadruple layer— man as woman introducing women as edgy women? Was this a category becoming misappropriated, disrespected, or lampooned? No, of course not. But the questions regarding category still persisted, and of course I could not refuse the extra fee for my additional hosting duties, as well as the opportunity to hire a Holt Renfrew Make-up artist and buy a new wig as I continue my ongoing search for a late middle aged feminine cross-dressed look as I approach my seventh decade of living in a male body that has been consistently defined as feminine for all of my life. As Tammy Wynette said, sometimes it’s hard to be a woman, and as I say in my two thirds transgendered haiku, dedicated to Ms. Wynette, “sometimes it makes me hard to be a woman”.

So when I come to a discussion of curating queer, my past and ongoing experience with queer, gender based trauma continues, and I am prompted to weave self comforting socially discomfiting web of quotes, proverbs, epigraphs, affirmations, what have you, from the words of artists, theorists, and artist/theorists I have come to admire over the past thirty to forty years as a queer subject bound by yet, to an extent, self-liberated through spoken word from the categories we often find ourselves confronted with.

American poet and activist June Jordan said:

Language is political... As a poet and writer, I deeply love and I deeply hate words. I love the infinite evidence and change and requirements and possibilities of language; every human use of words that is joyful, or honest or new, because experience is new.... But as a Black poet and writer, I hate words that cancel my name and my history and the freedom of my future: I hate the words that condemn and refuse the language of my people in America. (Jordan, 1973)

These words help me to shake the core of my constantly refashioned core beliefs that I have struggled with—beliefs instilled through racist, homophobic, and classist strategies by family, educators, friends and infrequent part time, confused lovers—thereby shaking the cores of the foundations of traditional categories and by doing so giving the curation and creation of my own work, and the work of other artists for festival reading series etc. a foundation of shaky ground to reside and perform upon thereby lending to my curatorial politics a decidedly liberationist and functionally dysfunctional approach.

After all, it is all about language and category. By loosening and intersecting the categories we may begin to blur and redefine the un-definable boundaries between various aspects of the ever-widening category we have come to call ‘queer’. But at the same time how do we preserve and respect the boundaries and intersections that have been historically and culturally produced and reproduced around notions of the sexually identifiable, the sexually unidentifiable, and everything else? How do we find work that addresses this without erasing other work that attempts to address particular contemporary categories—such as gay or lesbian—that embrace, by degree, the notion of the word and the concept ‘queerness’? It is an impossible task that we are forced and eager to take on when curating any given spoken word/literary event. Spoken word and Slam tends to work against what Frantz Fanon called ‘core belief’ when he said that:

Sometimes people hold a core belief that is very strong. When they are presented with evidence that works against that belief, the new evidence cannot be accepted. It would create a feeling that is extremely uncomfortable, called cognitive dissonance. And because it is so important to protect the core belief, they will rationalize, ignore and even deny anything that doesn't fit in with the core belief. (Fanon, 1967, p. 194)

Marjorie Garber, in *Vested Interests: Cross-dressing & Cultural Anxiety* (1992) refers to the term “*category crisis... a failure of definitional distinction, a borderline that becomes permeable... border crossings from one (apparently distinct) category to another...*” (p.

17).

In my own work and curation, I continually attempt to destabilize my White queer experience by creating intersections through symbols and signifiers, race sex and class elements that triumph and struggle against the conservative straight, White origins that surrounded and destabilized me as a child. For example, here is a passage from *Fried*, recently performed last fall as part of the Canadian Spoken Word Festival:

I roll little mounds of that sugary cabbage into grease laden leathery folds of his Kentucky fried white skin baked chicken parts ...the cooped up lives of the most delicious white meat I ever tasted ... on the racist streets of the tiny towns I inhabited as a child I have run from those streets and into every arm of every body I could find ...and we danced after school in Jackson Park by the bucolic orientalized shades of the pagoda bridge and you told me of all the restaurants you would take me to in a few years when we came of age and could run away together to Calgary because you deeply loved Buffy's Indian cowboys and their big white hats big wide smiles and you promised we would go to Ming and Pong those posh little martini bars that years later made me feel like I was a character in a racist movie of my own private life and you had googled photos of the hot springs at Banff and spoke of sacred ground overcome by artist residencies... then back in Ontario ten years prior you bought crack cocaine in the parking lot of the Brookdale Plaza where we saw Aunt Jemima at the Dominion grocery store selling pancakes with what claimed to be the real boat from the African Queen in the back of a truck from a back lot in Manhattan touring small town Ontario from Wawa to Peterborough to Petawawa to Penetanguishene to Wasaga Beach and back again..

The intersecting signifiers in any given spoken word poem, any given curatorial selection process, are essential as part of the decolonizing/decategorizing effort to queer spoken word art and art in general, while continuing to honour and acknowledge categories from the past that continue to require liberationist poetic modes in order to make their voices heard.

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Biography

David Bateman, PhD in English literature, specialized in creative writing from the University of Calgary, is an actor, a spoken word poet, and performance artist presently based in Toronto. His most recent performances, *Does this Giacometti Make Me Look Fat? (ART IMMUNO DEFICIENCY SYNDROME)* and *What's It Like?* were presented in Cyprus, Vancouver, Peterborough, Ottawa, Montreal, and Toronto. He has presented his work across the country, the United States, and Europe over the past twenty years and also teaches drama, literature, and creative writing at a variety of Canadian post-secondary institutions. His most recent poetry collection *'tis pity* was published by Frontenac House Press (Calgary), and his performance work has been published by Blizzard Press (Toronto), Ordinary Press (Peterborough), and finewords chapbooks (Victoria)

5. Entretien de Lynda Gaudreau autour du commissariat en performance

Lynda Gaudreau, artiste de la chorégraphie

Résumé : Cette communication plonge au cœur d'une recherche artistique où pratique, théorie et commissariat sont intimement imbriqués et complémentaires. La création est ici envisagée comme une longue chaîne de collaborations entre divers acteurs : artiste, commissaire, administrateur, producteur, critique et public. Comment le commissariat de la création s'exerce-t-il et se distingue-t-il au sein d'institutions scéniques ou muséales ? L'examen de la série *Out* de Lynda Gaudreau mettra en relief son approche novatrice et interreliée d'artistes et de commissaires et la perspective interdisciplinaire de sa pratique à l'extérieur des lieux de spectacles.

Initiée en 2009, la série *Out* de Lynda Gaudreau porte sur ce qui n'entre pas dans un système, sur le « misfit », sur la marge et l'excentricité esthétique, politique et sociale. Cette série se penche sur la circulation des langages et des outils entre les disciplines, plus particulièrement la chorégraphie, l'architecture et le cinéma. L'étude de cas portera sur deux des volets de cette série:

Out of Grace, une exposition chorégraphiée coproduite et présentée par la Galerie Leonard & Bina Ellen de Montréal en 2010. Ce projet hybride et expérimental, à la fois exposition chorégraphiée et chorégraphie mise en exposition, a suscité un questionnement sur la nature et l'imbrication de ces pratiques. La chorégraphie ne se limitait pas seulement au corps, mais s'étendait également à l'organisation et à la construction constante de l'espace. Des artistes visuels étaient invités à penser leurs oeuvres sur les cinq semaines de l'exposition. Une seconde version de l'exposition a été réalisée en dialogue avec la collection permanente du Musée M de Louvain (Belgique) en 2012, avec la participation d'étudiants et d'artistes de l'Académie royale des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles et de l'institut a.pass.

Out of Mies, une installation lancée à l'Architectural Association (AA) de Londres en février 2014. Cette installation comporte une série de courts métrages sur trois sites montréalais conçus par l'architecte Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.

Entretien entre Lynda Gaudreau et Aurélie Vandewynckele¹

Aurélie Vandewynckele : Quelle fonction joue le commissariat dans votre processus de recherche et de création ?

RÔLE DE RECHERCHE, TRAVAIL DANS LE TEMPS et QUESTIONNER L'OBJET ET LE CORPS

Lynda Gaudreau : Le commissariat joue un rôle de recherche. Il permet de dialoguer avec d'autres artistes sur des sujets et des questions communes. Il me permet également de me pencher sur la « mise en temps » des œuvres, c'est-à-dire exposition versus installation versus performance. La pratique commissariale permet d'explorer chacune de ces réalités ; ces formes

ne sont pas figées, elles existent dans le temps. Cette pratique me permet également d'investiguer les diverses réalités de l'objet et du corps dans l'espace.

A.V: Quelle analyse faites-vous de l'entrée de plus en plus marquée des pratiques performatives et chorégraphiques au sein du musée et des galeries ?

L.G. : C'est très stimulant. La chorégraphie a toujours été présente dans les musées et galeries mais de manière plutôt cadrée. Ces dernières années on assiste à un retour d'intérêt très marqué pour la chorégraphie et le performatif.

En revanche, bien que les conservateurs des musées savent comment travailler avec les œuvres matérielles, ils comprennent peu l'art vivant. La présence du corps occupe le plus souvent une fonction de divertissement dans le musée ; les performances sont devenues assez prévisibles. La chorégraphie a beaucoup plus à offrir, ce n'est pas une discipline, c'est un art du temps et de l'espace qui travaille avec à peu près n'importe quel matériau et aussi avec l'immatériel. Reléguer cet art à sa seule fonction performative est une erreur et témoigne d'un profond malentendu sur sa réalité.

La Hayward Gallery a tenté un projet courageux en 2011 qui s'est soldé en un lamentable échec. Il y avait chez les organisateurs de l'évènement une profonde incompréhension de l'espace qu'un tel projet exige. On avait entassé des artistes de la danse, de la performance et des arts visuels, les uns à cotés des autres. Des œuvres visuelles devenaient n'importe quoi, des corps devenaient n'importe quoi, c'était navrant à voir. Le commissariat de la performance requiert une éducation particulière. Les œuvres chorégraphiques demandent un autre type d'attention et une sensibilité à la réalité du performeur, à savoir comment il travaille, comment il exerce sa présence dans un lieu tel que le musée et la galerie. Le musée, la galerie, n'ont pas prévu la présence des artistes « vivants ». Les performeurs ont besoin de se changer par exemple, d'avoir un petit espace à eux et tout simplement « d'être » dans un espace. L'art est vivant.

A.V : Lynda, pouvez-vous nous parler de votre manière d'aborder le temps pour le travail scénique et pour l'espace d'exposition ?

L.G. : Le temps de la scène est très différent du temps en galerie, sans compter le temps monétaire entrant en ligne de compte pour le spectacle scénique : lorsqu'on paie un billet de spectacle, on s'attend à une livraison dans un cadre donné. L'expérience du temps dans ce contexte est intimement liée au protocole théâtral. L'espace d'exposition permet en revanche une intimité spatiale avec les œuvres et une plus grande autonomie de l'expérience. C'est un espace complexe, ou en un déclic, le visiteur et le performeur peuvent transformer par leurs seules présences la nature de ce que l'on voit.

L'espace de la galerie et la proximité possibles entre le visiteur et le performeur permettent d'explorer en profondeur les différents types de présence qu'un corps offre. La distance entre le visiteur et le performeur agit sur notre perception et sur le statut de ce que l'on voit ; par sa seule présence un corps peut passer de l'image, à la sculpture, à l'objet, à une peinture, etcetera.

BOUGER DANS UN MUSÉE OU UNE GALERIE

Le musée est une institution faisant face à des enjeux économiques, éducatifs et de sécurité de ses œuvres. Ceci impose pour un performeur une certaine façon de bouger, de s'approcher des œuvres, bref, une certaine distance à maintenir. Dans une galerie la distance est plus souvent avec la personne qui est à la réception... qui peut être intimidante.

A.V : Pourriez-vous développer sur les différentes transpositions entre les deux lieux du projet Out of Grace ?

GALERIE vs MUSÉE

L.G : Le Musée M à Louvain² possède une collection d'œuvres anciennes, ceci implique le respect d'un protocole pour la conservation des œuvres.

Les murs sont devenus pratiquement impossible à utiliser pour les interprètes. Ceci limitait les possibilités corporelles mais aussi les possibilités de se lier au œuvres, de s'en rapprocher et induisait une qualité dans le corps des interprètes. L'activité de marcher était ce qui

fonctionnait le mieux, sinon, le geste des interprètes apparaissaient comme une sorte de jeu obscur.

À la galerie Leonard & Bina Ellen³, nous avons une liberté beaucoup plus grande, cela s'explique notamment du fait que nous nous y avons travaillé en résidence et avons eu beaucoup plus de temps.

L'équipe de la galerie et l'espace-même de la galerie se sont transformés pour accueillir le projet, la salle des archives est devenue la loge des interprètes. Au Musée M, il n'y avait pas cette porosité, c'était de petits arrangements à prendre au quotidien, et d'une certaine manière des stratégies à développer dans les différents lieux résiduels du musée. Ceci étant, la direction du M a fait tout ce qu'elle pouvait, mais nous étions malgré tous les éléphants dans la ménagerie de verre.

A. V. : Quelle différence faites-vous entre œuvre et projet ?

L.G. : À la galerie Leonard & Bina Ellen avec la directrice Michèle Thériault, nous avons toujours utilisé le terme projet, il nous a paru plus inclusif. Une œuvre réfère davantage à un artiste alors qu'un projet fait appel à un groupe, à un processus. Plusieurs œuvres composaient le projet, ceci étant, il s'agissait d'une proposition de ma part..nous revenons au début de cette entrevue : j'avais reçue une invitation de Michèle Thériault à faire un commissariat qui est vite devenue une recherche à laquelle j'ai convié plusieurs artistes, et en bout de ligne, il s'agissait tout simplement d'un projet. ⁴

¹ Aurélie Vandewynckele est commissaire

² http://www.playgroundfestival.be/2012_programme/detail/60451

³ http://ellengallery.concordia.ca/fr/expositions_outofgrace.php

Biographie

Lynda Gaudreau mène une carrière internationale depuis 1991, principalement en Europe. Son travail, le plus souvent minimal, joue essentiellement sur des quantités de temps, d'espace et de mouvement, et s'élabore au sein de séries. Sa pratique artistique entretient un dialogue permanent avec l'architecture, les arts visuels, le cinéma et la performance. La création, la recherche et le commissariat en constituent les trois modalités, inextricablement liées les unes aux autres. L'ouverture et la diversité de son approche - une pratique de l'espace entre

chorégraphie et arts visuels - l'ont amenée à concevoir une variété d'interventions chorégraphiques (œuvres scéniques, installations, laboratoires, événements, projets vidéo) et à investir des lieux éclectiques, du théâtre conventionnel au musée en passant par la médiathèque. Sa pratique des plus expérimentale, se situe entre l'université, le workshop et l'atelier.

Elle a collaboré avec de nombreux lieux parmi les plus prestigieux de la scène contemporaine en Allemagne, en Autriche, en Belgique, au Brésil, au Canada, en Croatie, au Danemark, en Espagne, en France, en Israël, en Italie, au Royaume-Uni, en Slovénie et en Suisse. Mentionnons, entre autres, le Théâtre de la Ville de Paris, qui a coproduit et diffusé son travail pendant près de sept ans, la Biennale de Venise, le Festival d'Avignon, le Kunstenfestivaldesarts, le Festival international de nouvelle danse, l'école P.A.R.T.S. d'Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker et la galerie Leonard & Bina Ellen avec qui elle a collaboré. Elle est activement impliquée dans le développement d'événements et de laboratoires sur la recherche et la création, qu'elle conçoit en écho aux réalités économiques d'aujourd'hui. Ses préoccupations sont principalement liées aux questions de performativité de l'espace et de ses enjeux esthétiques, sociaux et politiques.

6. Perverse Curating

Jacob Wren, Co-artistic director of PME-ART

Abstract: My paper “Perverse Curating” will implicitly critique some dominant forms of curating as being too smooth, too even, too well thought out, too all together. It will do so by proposing a number of more perverse, anarchic, playful, unconventional (and perhaps even impossible) ways of putting works and artists together.

It all began with the slightly ridiculous title: “Perverse Curating”. Could I think of any curatorial projects that were willfully, provocatively perverse? What might it mean for curating to be perverse? Much curating today is perhaps unintentionally perverse. I am of course asking what it would mean for curating to be perverse on purpose. To take the power dynamic implicit in any curatorial act and turn it inside out, make it more consensual and playful. These are all metaphors and analogies that I intend as useful, though at times also slightly painful, provocations.

I am partly thinking of one of Chantal Mouffe’s best-known terms: agonism, ‘a political theory that emphasizes the potentially positive aspects of certain (but not all) forms of political conflict.’ While, according to Mouffe, agonism is a necessary part of any democratic process, within a performance program it might be useful to put the works into some sort of more extreme form of inter-thematic conflict. (The word I am using for this more extreme form is ‘perverse.’) As well, because a work of art always has many meanings, I would be interested to see if there were ways of creating conflicts that took place simultaneously on varying levels of sensation and content.

It is my intention to use the term ‘perverse curating’ over a number of different contexts and platforms: on the internet, in visual art, in performance, in theory, in my life. It is a term that continues to transform in meaning as I continue to explore it. At *Envisioning the Practice* I plan to explore a few aspects of this term in direct relation to the current discourse around curating performance, with the hope of sending the discussion spiraling off in unexpected, charming and useful directions.

[Parenthetical introduction: At the ACAQ 2014 symposium I projected each of the following sentences. Some of the sentences I let stand, as brief moments of reading-silence, while others served as a fulcrum for my own verbal explanations or reflections. At first, I thought I would attempt here to recount some of the things I had said about some of these sentences. But, upon further reflection, that now feels like a misguided approach. The point of the presentation was to allow myself to freely reflect on some of these sentiments. It was speaking as the opposite of writing. To later write down similar things feels to me, at least at this moment, like it would almost undo the spirit and actuality of my presentation. Nonetheless, I give you the sentences as they are. If you do not have my reflections upon them, at the very least you still have your own.

This Perverse Curating presentation is part of a much longer, ongoing on line text that can be found here: <http://radicalcut.blogspot.ca/2012/02/perverse-curating.html>]

A short history of anti-theatre, non-music, counter-philosophy, semi-specific art and unpolitics.

Because I love art, I want art to be different.

The international artist is a capitalist fantasy.

Awkwardness is collaborative. – James Guida (2009)

I stopped listening to depressing music, started listening to joyous music, hoping for less depression and more joy.

They found themselves questioning ambiguity and its presumed neutrality in their work. – Juliana Spahr (2007)

I sometimes think that there is nothing but time, that what you see and what you feel is what time looks like at that moment. – Paul Thek (in Kraus, 2000)

I made my first performance in 1990, published my first book in 1992.

While still in art school, all artists should take mandatory courses in humility.

The idea that we know art is in many ways fundamentally reactionary and conservative but still want to believe that it is radical and revolutionary and within the space of this paradox there is room for much to happen.

Poetry only changes if we refuse it. Just as the world is only changed by those who refuse it. – Henri Meschonnic (2010)

...a monotonous male reality. Which seems just sort of staid and old. Tapped out. – Eileen Myles (2011)

Internet failure.

The fact that air and water are still sometimes free is a deep pain in the hearts of capitalists everywhere.

Improvisation is also composition.

...and you know how closely cynicism is related to vulnerability. – Ben Mink (in Udovich (1993)

Maybe the first song you ever heard was the wrong one.

In order to go on living one must try to escape the death involved in perfectionism. – Hannah Arendt (possibly in an interview with David Levi-Strauss, source and date unknown).

The accurate analysis of my practice is not the analysis that most excites me.

Agent provocateurs promoted violence, which was in turn used to justify greater state repression.

I feel extremely alienated by the dominant discourse, but I also feel somewhat alienated by a long series of other, less dominant discourses.

Going out dancing versus watching a contemporary dance performance.

We need a counter-literature.

All the artists I admire are such a strange combination of completely open and completely stubborn.

Someone becomes an artist because at some point in their life someone, implicitly or explicitly, gave them permission to do so.

We need an accurate analysis of the situation to proceed, but the road to an accurate analysis leads only to further debate.

After your presentation, during the questions, at the end of each question, simply admit that you don't know.

The autodidact is often marked by a fondness for quotations.

Trying not to repeat history is a repetition of others who have tried not to repeat history in the past.

“A writer who wrote only the things he intended would be a very poor writer.” – Borges (source forgotten) / The tendency in conceptual art to foreground intention.

When nothing is finished, everything is possible.

(A Partial and Unconventional) List of Works Cited

The Hannah Arendt quote is mysterious. I believe I found it in an interview with David Levi-Strauss. But I have never been able to find it again.

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7. PERFORMING ARTS CURATING IN SOUTH AFRICA: CONTEXT AND POSSIBILITIES IN ROSTRUM ROULETTE FESTIVAL

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Abstract: Curating as a word is better known in visual arts than in performing arts. Its incursion into the realm of performing arts practice is a new development and can be taken to represent further extensions in intellectual and artistic practice in the globalising space of the twenty first century. Vujanovic (2012) states that performing art curating is a ‘buzzword’ in the international performing arts scene. Also, that curating is gaining impetus and demonstrating relevance in the performing arts field exhibits significant indication of the changing environment of practice and praxis. If this is the situation in a global context, in Africa and perhaps other parts of the developing world, performing arts curating does not appear to gain the kind of recognition it is getting in the developed world. However, recent experiments in the performing arts circuit in South Africa within the university environment, in particular, point to a gradual emergence of some level of performing arts curating that is yet to be noticed and given scholarly attention. A very handy example is the *Rostrum Roulette*, an annual performing arts festival in Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria that perhaps emblemizes ‘creative curating’ by lecturers and student presenters from the Drama and Film programme of the university. This paper examines this performing arts event as a potentially-curated artistic event with greater prospects for future development into a full scale performing arts curating site that can become a model for sub-Saharan Africa. The motivation for this paper is to present conceptual thoughts on the context and possibilities of Performing arts curating within the South African university performing arts scene as a contributing step towards understanding and situating performing arts curating in African tertiary curriculum which is currently not receiving the attention it deserves.

INTRODUCTION

The practice of performing arts is more traditionally situated in drama, theatre, music, dance, vocal arts, musical theatre and other performative activities categorized in that genre. In the performing arts arena, the dominant roles and vocations includes the director, playwright, actor, choreographer, designers, conductor, and composer, amongst others. In the theatre specifically, the work of the director or *regisseur* commands central focus and has dominated discourse of theatrical arts for ages. To a great extent, theatre—in its broad Western context—is the director’s profession. Inside his or her vocational space, the actor or actress submits his or her talent to the defining and creative manipulation of the master craftsman of the stage: the director. The director has come, therefore, to represent the foremost person charged with the responsibility of aligning all the elements of a production into a creative union of arts. He or she is also the one who creates, manages and projects the functional viability of the stimulating artistic nay creative relationship between the playwright, the actor and the audience. The director is, therefore, the total designer of a production: the principal ‘idea man’ who matches concrete

form with imagined ideas (Hodge, 2000, p. 3). The other artists or contributors (such as the playwright or designers) stay under the imposing image of the super artist called the director.

In operatic music, the two major players that lead proceedings are the composer and the conductor. They represent another dimension of the dictatorship of the director in the musical arena. The singers and the other artists that work together to bring all the musical elements into a place of unity and harmony all work under the imposing image of the composer and the conductor. Often, all references to a musical work go to these two creative personalities in the reviews and commentary in the media (Shrock, 2010).

What is said in theatre and music is replicated in dance arts through the image of another super artist: the choreographer. The choreographer is the director of dance and so retains a position of privilege in professional circles and in the public. Often, dance patrons attend a show because of the choreographer's reputation; as such, the financial fortunes of a company depend on the personality and profile of the choreographer. For example, in an interview on BBC Television on March 29, 2014 Tamara Rojo, the Artistic Director/Lead Principal of the English National Ballet, emphasized the critical need to train dancers who can take over from her and are also able to attract audiences "without depending on my name to sell tickets" (Rojo, in BBC HARDTalk, 2014). As much as it is true in a global context, this configuration of the performing arts and key players in the industry is also what was transferred to Africa through colonialism. The educational curriculum in many post-colonial societies, especially in Africa, continues to retain the identity of this old arrangement Freeborn (2005, p. 1). Amegago (2011) further adds that:

In this contemporary era, the accelerated global cultural interaction due to western exploration, colonization, technology, capitalism, and the media has contributed to the formation of nation states and intra-states through the grouping of former communities/nations, leading to the emergence of multiple domains of knowledge within the global systems. These phenomena have had considerable impact on African cultures and the African educational system. (p. xiii)

In practical terms, the practice of the performing arts follows the same route, and there is rarely any mention of a curator in performing arts context.

What is said so far is to buttress the fact that performing arts curating is, to again borrow Vujanovic's (2012) word, a 'buzz word'. Not only is it an uncommon expression in Africa, it also connotes some transgressive tendencies that seem bent on creating a clash between the Museum and Fine Arts practice environment (where curating commonly resides) and that of the performing arts (which remains somewhat unaware of the nuances of curating). Viewed from another angle, the incidental incursion of curating into the performance field appears currently mooted by new developments in performance art and other hybrid practices. Vujanovic once again offers some guidance on the place of some curating in performing arts practice. She goes on to align the context of the practice by creating a connection between it and traditional roles and registers of the performing arts. In this regard, the performing arts curator is variously identified as "a selector, programmer, or curator" whose job entails "a neutral facilitation of direct insights, planning, selecting, and representing" (Vujanovic, 2013, p. 3). The role of the curator in this context has some similarities to the job of a theatre director, choreographer and or conductor. While this may be taken to represent early insight into the relationship between curating and the performing, however, that insight can only be better explored by understanding the concept of curating from its very traditional and professional basis in the applied arts fields.

WHAT IS CURATING?

Curating has assumed different definitions and connotations over the years. Concepts like content curating, curated recipes, fashion curating, musical curating, online curating, digital curating and many other hybrid terms are gradually gaining currency in the lexicon of daily communication (Pierroux, Krangle & Sem, 2011). Traditionally, curating involves the collection, exhibition and explanation of artistic objects in a deliberately designed space, with access to the public, to explain their origin and value within a historical context (Vasileiou, 2014). Namba (2012) sees the curator as "someone who creates exhibitions and who endeavours to propose, new values and new perspectives" (p. 5). Gaskill (2011) elaborates the context by describing the curator as "one that cares for our cultural products and their significance" (p. 1).

Within this frame of understanding, the curator assumes various roles that also constitute the frames of his or her professional identification. Again, Gaskill (2011) states that: "Contemporary curators are summarised with a range of descriptive words such as caretaker,

facilitator, mediator, catalyst, context provider, collaborator and negotiator” (p. 1). However, Gaskill (2011) also admits that a more public understanding of the role of the curator “is only just beginning to shift away from the traditional role associated with museums and galleries” (ibid). This is where the possibilities of curating in the performing arts appears to make sense especially given the context of the admission by practitioners of curating in the applied arts fields that there is a shift.

CURATING IN PERFORMING ARTS: POSSIBILITIES

There is increasing innovation and advancement in contemporary artistic engagement, and research that points to dynamics of changing times and thinking. The times have changed and vocational pursuits have also changed focus and commitment. What the disciplines of the arts now pursue as their research and practice goals is different in many ways than before. The enormous expression of the changing patterns and shifts in the artistic or creative fields is both a conscious and unconscious reaction to the dictates of a globalised environment. Art is no longer art for art’s sake (Harrington, 2004, p. 14). New paradigms of inquiry have emerged with the profundity and intellectual gusto of their proponents. “New directions in the humanities” is the current swan song of research engagement and practice in the human sciences. Steam (1993) observes the development and advances that the prospect of a new thrust in humanities education builds on the innovative scholarship in history and cultural studies that has so dramatically expanded the knowledge base and altered elements of the theoretical approach in the constituent disciplines (p. 210).

Theories that drove operation in certain disciplines in the past have been reviewed, repositioned and rearticulated. Others have been completely abandoned and erased out of the driving seat of research practice in some areas of scientific inquiry. New courses, disciplines and niche areas of focus emerge on a daily basis, replacing old paradigms while off-shooting new thinking in the process. Knowledge pursuit currently witnesses a serious paradigm shift and scholars and researchers suddenly find themselves rethinking and repositioning themselves for new challenges in a bid to brace up with the new demands of the knowledge industry. Hunyadi (2011) underscores this changing paradigm in humanities education, stating that the introduction

of computing methodologies in the humanities brought about significant changes both in the scope of humanities research and in the way research was to be carried out (p. 1).

The theatre is not without its own experience in the current dispensation. Theatrical engagement has also headed towards the direction of new theorisation and practice, reinventing and changing the thespian vocation in the process. The theatre of today has gone beyond the playhouse, star performers and grand opening nights in search of new spaces and events for expression (Kalipeni & Kamlongera, 1996; Prendergast & Saxton, 2009). Outside the traditional confines of the play house where the director directs proceedings, there appears to be new insights on the role of the director, that extend beyond packaging a show to curating a festival of plays. There are various perspectives that support the possibilities of curating in the performing arts. Wenner (2012), Gaskill (2011), Boldt (2011), Currie (cited in Seidman, 2013) all agree that curating also takes place in the performing arts arena, outside of the dated confines of the museum hall. For example, the BBC announces in its website that “writer and director Mark Ravenhill curates a season of classic plays for Drama on 3” (Drama on 3, 2014). The context of the usage of the word ‘curate’ asserts a non-traditionalist dialectics to drama more applied to terms like directing or producing. That curating is not only gradually entering the mainstream lexicon, but is also being used by traditional drama or performing arts platform such as the BBC, says a lot about its possibilities in a new context.

In addition to the citations above, Boldt (2011) observes that, “In the last ten years, the job description ‘curator’ has moved from the fine arts to the theatre” (p. 2). She goes on to contextualize this development by stating that:

On the one hand, this transfer reflects a trend especially in independent theatre to orient itself increasingly to the visual arts – although it is precisely in the independent scene that the curator is looked upon critically as a meta-artist and sole arbiter. On the other hand, this transfer represents a change in professional practice: since the 1990s, formats such as festivals and congresses have moved into the theatre, art and theory have been linked, and interdisciplinary projects cultivated. It is more and more deemed important to create contexts for individual works and to set artistic signatures in relation to each other. (ibid)

Boldt’s position appears the best explanation of this emerging concept of curation in the theatre world, and by extension the performing arts field. That she also describes the curator as “a

preparer” who “makes ready event as best as he can” (p. 1) not only aligns the curator’s relevance to a performing arts context but also establishes the basis for the gradual shift and acceptance of this nomenclature in the performance world other than the fine arts that it originates from. Gaskill (2011) affirms this development by noting that the practice of curating has shifted dramatically from its backstage origins within dusty museums to a role at the forefront of modern art, which includes the field of performing arts.

PERFORMING ARTS CURATING: CONTEXT AND POSSIBILITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

The current absence of a defining context for performing arts curating in Africa does not mean there is no possibility of a development in that regard. What is clearly obvious is the negligible interest and perhaps unconscious black out of the field by scholars in the continent. Notwithstanding this scenario, recent developments in South Africa are already providing gradual indication that perhaps performing arts curating (or elements of the practice) is beginning to develop in South African university-based festivals. A look at the current state of the performing arts industry becomes necessary before we embark on a more elaborate examination of this development.

Post-Apartheid Theatre in South Africa: Overview

The change in governance policy based on apartheid and the transition to democracy in South Africa in 1994 signalled changes in the operation of theatre in the country. Prior to this time, theatre was an exclusive reserve of the white population and performing arts generally dwelt and expressed only Euro-centric notations (Heerden, 2008, p. 3). Active sights of performing arts activities, such as the play house and theatres, were clearly marked for a white only patronage; it was a taboo for a black person to even go near a theatre, let alone watch a play. Performers and artistes also observed strict rules of engagement on the stage where there was any opportunity to perform together. The State Theatre in Pretoria, a national performing arts institution, maintained a policy of segregation that completely excluded black people from participation in performing arts activities (Moore, 2010).

Democracy has brought about radical changes to the performing arts landscape in South Africa. Not only has apartheid era policy been expunged from the running of performing arts institutions, freedom of practice is also bearing on the artistic atmosphere of the country currently. A non-racial environment of access to spaces and resources that supports the growth of the arts is gradually evolving and therefore expanding the scope and context of the South African performing arts experience. Theatre troupes and contemporary performance outfits are now able to showcase their talents in different occasions, such as: state functions, for tourism purposes, educational and research events and, sometimes, in sheer expression of the natural South African spirit of entertainment. Traditional musical, dance and performing groups are gaining new impetus and their productions have further come to represent new expression of indigenous arts forms that were hitherto suppressed. Moreover, in a bid to strengthen the development of the arts in the rural localities, as well as creating memorials for the role that the performing arts played in the anti-apartheid crusade, modern theatre houses and performance spaces have been constructed by the government in locations (such as Soweto) that represented the hotbed of anti-apartheid protests. Sirayi (2012) observes the performing arts scene in today's South Africa and concludes that:

Contemporary African drama may, therefore, be seen as the meeting place of both pre-colonial African and European drama traditions. Many African playwrights in South Africa base their plays on oral genres, such as oral history, epic, myth, animal stories, integrating these with European drama traditions, such as an envelope auditorium, stage, scenery, lights, actor, stage direction, and playwright. Some African playwrights borrow their themes from oral forms mentioned above, whereas others draw on indigenous cultural practices, such as *lobola*, *intlombe yamagqirha*, initiation ceremonies, or the authority of parents over children, and combine them with European drama traditions. (p. 136)

This illustration cites what Krueger (2008) refers to as a syncretism, a term that describes “amalgamation and creative fusion of cultural resources” (p. 4) with particular reference to the plays of recent South African playwrights writing in English.

All this goes to show that things have changed tremendously in the performing arts landscape of post-apartheid South Africa. The plays and playwriting have taken new courses and thematic preoccupation. Unlike the plays of the past that dutifully idealized anti-apartheid credo, current plays tends towards explorations of the challenges of the emergent nation like poverty,

corruption in governance circles, violence against women and children, the anxieties of unfulfilled promises and the general problems associated with urban life. While the government vigorously pursues the task of redrawing the performing arts map of the country, the private artistic industrial sector is still generally dominated by white creative entrepreneurs who are also devising means of integrating *transformation* into their practice. Gervisser (1995) studies the situation and observes this as a desperate attempt at “Africanizing both their productions and their audiences” (p. 7). The universities play very active role in creating a vibrant arts scene in the country, not only through training but also in active engagement in the staging of creative activities that enrich and enliven South African society. One of such institutions is the Drama & Film department at the Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria, which I will now discuss.

TUT Drama School: An Artistic Profile

The Department of Drama and Film at the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) started in the 1970s from the early arts programmes developed and maintained by the then Technikon, Pretoria (Pretoria Polytechnic), where the current university grew out from. According to Theron (2004), the original aim of the department was to “look at performance training from a different angle” by focusing on “delivering career-oriented training” (p. 3). This original plan is still maintained but with ample shifts in orientation to a holistic transformation into a research university in line with the university’s status change in 2004 to a university of technology.

Since its inception to date, the Tshwane University of Technology has maintained high reputation as a training centre for professionals in the creative industry in South Africa and beyond producing many alumni that have gone on to successful career in film, stage, radio, television, arts management, playwriting, teaching and research and allied fields outside the core creative areas. Situated in the faculty of the arts that is located in an exclusive arts campus in the centre of the business hub in the city centre, the drama and film department works assiduously to achieve the faculty’s vision of being “a competitive faculty of the arts that nurtures creativity, innovation and cultural understanding” (TUT Arts Prospectus, 2014, p. 6).

The creative profile of the department parades a diversity of productions that straddle different genres of performance. From physical theatre, contemporary performance, installation and site-specific performance, directing, acting, children's theatre, and theatre dance, to applied theatre and cultural policy research, the department remains a constant reference point for active engagement in arts education in South Africa. No less than ten major productions takes place a year as practical component of the various courses offered in the department's drama program alone. The film program, which is located on a separate state of the arts production and editing facility, also produces various students' films, in addition to the films by faculty members, which are showcased in film festivals in South Africa and abroad. Moreover, the department also runs two annual festivals including the *Rostrum Roultte* and *DirActions*, a creative avenue for advanced directing students to showcase their fledging talents and learning outcomes.

ROSTRUM ROULETTE FESTIVAL

This section will specifically use the example of *Rostrum Roulette*, an annual performance festival collaboratively organized by students with minimal supervision by lecturers of the Department of Drama and Film, Tshwane University of Technology, to discuss the context and possibilities of performing arts curating in South Africa. The history/context, structure, artistic and organizational components of the festival is reviewed with a view to identifying its potentials as a possibly curated performing arts event.

History/Context

The *Rostrum Roulette* festival takes its name from the *Rostrum*, a primary experimental theatre facility owned by the Department of Drama and Film at the Tshwane University of Technology. The *Rostrum Roulette* originally started as a practical examination component for Bachelor's degree students in the Drama programme, only developing into its present form as a festival in 2010. According to Dr Janine Lewis, who has been coordinating the festival in the past four years, *Rostrum Roulette* primarily aims to showcase both final year Arts Administration and Directing Students in a practicum that consolidates the theoretical component of their training with a practice-based model exploration of real-scenario building of industry dynamics (Dr Janine Lewis, interview with the author, February 12, 2013). The festival is therefore anchored on four educational goals:

- To act as a showcase where student directors can demonstrate their artistic capabilities through a public showcase of their work in a festival environment, while learning how to manage the logistics of handling things in a festival as budding directors;
- To provide opportunity for student actors to perform in a festival environment and therefore learn how to manage the pressures that come with working in a high-paced, professional environment;
- To give student technicians a practical environment in which to learn about of the technical components and safety issues that can arise when running a festival;
- To allow Art Administration students to participate in a practical management project by initiating, organizing, curating and running a festival.

Structure/Organization

Rostrum Roulette is a student-run festival, with a faculty member from the Department of Drama and Film facilitating the process. Each year, the students must set out directions and goals they wish to achieve, and conceptualize the festival according to these, all while remembering that every year's showcase must be different from that of the previous year; as such, it adopts a flexible format to accommodate a diversity of concepts and ideas the students aim to achieve. Students can participate in the festival in various ways, both in a Arts Management or participatory capacity and as a form of required semester artistic engagement. Students who participate from an arts management perspective concentrate on roles in planning, administration, promotion/publicity and general marketing of the festival while those who play active part as actors in the selected productions focus on training and rehearsals to ensure a good packaging of the productions to be showcased during the festival.

The students begin by democratically electing a management committee. The management committee then appoints a director of the festival from one of its members. This committee must meet regularly, and conduct research so that the students can acquaint themselves with the dynamics of running a festival that will showcase the department to the public. They consult experts and professionals to acquire the skills that they will need to execute the festival successfully. They do focus groups, interviews, literature reviews; case studies of other festivals acquire the information that will help them in organizing a successful festival. Critical to the success of the festival will be the acquisition of skills in arts promotion and audience management. The students acquire these skills by serving short internship period in both public and private and private arts institutions to understudy how other major festivals are

handled and relate the dynamics they observe to what they showcase in a particular year. They also generally read about how festivals are organized from different sources and meet former students of the department to solicit information and gain insight into how they handled the festival in their own time as students.

Moreover, since the committee is charged with running the festival in a professional manner, they have to research on the functioning of the business world (for example, learning how advertising or media communication functions). Managing resources including money, personnel, equipments and locations is critical to the outcome of the festival, and the students must work with this in mind right from the outset. Their capacity to manage the festival will not only earn them accolades for running the festival successfully in their time, but it will also contribute to the final mark that they obtain in the courses attached to the festival. Of course, the festival organization has to be experiential so that the students mistakes and learn from them. As such, they learn to perfect their act and gain the much needed expertise that is required in the industry.

Collecting and Exhibiting

Rostrum Roulette involves a collection of plays and other performances by students of the department of Drama and Theatre. In a way, these performances are ‘art objects’ that are collected, assembled and examined to ensure that they are suitable for showcasing during the festival. The programming process follows rigorous selection criteria to ensure that what is accepted stands the test of time and is considered by the management team to be of a high enough quality to represent the artistic profile of the department. In this regard, a play has to address a subject matter that is relevant to societal development and the transformation of the new South Africa and should also be able to provide further learning opportunities for both the participants and the audience being an educational event.

The collected art works or performances are assembled and exhibited during the festival for public viewing. Every performance requires ingenious use of space, design and management of large number of people. The students are divided by the festival management committee into various teams that take care of security, audience management, sound and acoustics, lighting and

marketing. Each of these teams generates concepts and ideas that ensure that the exhibition not only turns out well but offer satisfaction to their patrons who pay money to watch it.

The Curator's Role and its implication in *Rostrum Roulette*

The curator has been described as a caretaker, facilitator, mediator, catalyst, context provider, collaborator and negotiator (Gaskill, 2011; Boldt, 2011). Indeed, as discussed earlier, curating in the performing arts setting revolves around some core activities including: organizing, managing, researching, collecting and exhibiting. As we have seen, these roles and activities are synonymous with those of the *Rostrum Roulette* festival director and organizers. These students act as caretakers of all resources such as finances, personnel, equipments, locations needed to execute the performances. The festival director serves as a facilitator who guides the process of planning the festival: he or she works in concert with the various performance directors and artists to ensure that everything is in place for the festival to run successfully. Of course, the director cannot run a festival of such magnitude without collaborating with both staff and students, and must negotiate to achieve the stated goals of the festival, making appropriate decisions to enhance a hitch-free festival during his or her tenure as director, and working to provide of all resources and guidance that are needed by the different personnel to perform their duties. Finally, the festival director might also act as a mediator, settling conflicts where they arise (and also putting up structures such as documenting the source of the conflict and what was done to settle it in his or her final report of the festival to avoid future occurrence of such conflicts).

THE FUTURE OF PERFORMANCE CURATING IN SOUTH AFRICA

Performing arts curating, as observed by different practitioners and researchers, (Tancons, 2010; Gaskill, 2011; Wenner, 2012; Lange, Lavangna & Aue, 2014) is gradually moving up the ladder, becoming a more recognized practice in contemporary arts circles. In the process, the concept of curating has been redefined, repositioned and is becoming more relevant in the twenty-first century (Roos-Brown, 2013). However, in South Africa (and, I would argue, Africa by extension), curating is still a buzz word in the performing arts context, and has yet to assume a place of relevance in the contemporary artistic environment of arts practice. The South African Heritage and Museum management circles have yet to fully come to grasp with the

significance of incorporating performing arts dynamics into curatorial services in the country. Notwithstanding the present scenario of little activity in the area of performing arts curating in South Africa and Africa, everything looks already naturally configured to change.

Recently, some tertiary institutions within South Africa (notably the Drama Department of TUT) have begun collaboration with the management of the National Museum in Pretoria to showcase performances that depict the apartheid history of the country. While this does not directly impact on the development of performing arts curating, there are ample prospects in future expansion into the different cultural institutions in South Africa. An early foundation in South Africa may expand to other parts of Africa, since South Africa sits geographically as the gateway to Africa from other continents. Also, the role of TUT drama in promoting performing arts curating could be extended beyond its present context in the *Rostrum Roulette*, a TUT drama student-run festival, to become a larger performing curating festival that can accommodate staff and students of other drama and performing arts departments in South Africa, given the right support. With the current effort to institute a new diploma and postgraduate programme in Cultural Policy and Arts Management at TUT, the route for the creation and integration of a course in performing arts curating into the curriculum could serve to draw more local attention to its relevance in the field of creative scholarship.

CONCLUSION

This paper was conceived with the aim of identifying the possibilities of performing arts curating—a practice that presently lacks representation in South Africa, if not the entire African continent)—in *Rostrum Roulette*, a student-run festival in Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria. Although there are no established contexts for assessing a festival to ascertain the presence of curating as practiced in the developed world, I have drawn out several points that indicate that there is some form of curating taking place in the collective organization of this annual creative arts festival. I have drawn from existing literature on contemporary curatorial practices to substantiate the viability of positioning (or re-positioning) creative practices the Department of Film and Drama as a showcase that meets the templates of global identification as curated festival. I conclude by proposing that there are brilliant prospects in integrating performing arts curating in the scholarly focus of tertiary institutions in South Africa and Africa

generally as it can help in extending the boundaries of global understanding of the arts and creative industries in the continent. In suggesting this, the paper acknowledges that universities play very significant and central role in the sustenance and development of the performing arts in post-apartheid South Africa. Apart from being training centres for past and upcoming practitioners in the field, universities remain critical to the daily practice of the arts in South Africa and perhaps remains the most active location for performing arts practice outside of the mainstream industry.

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Interview

Interview with Dr Janine Lewis on February 12, 2013 in Room 4(104), Department of Drama & Film, Tshwane University of Technology, Arts Campus, Pretoria.

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Biography:

Ofonime Inyang is a PhD candidate in the Department of Drama and Film, Tshwane University of Technology. His research interlinks applied theatre pedagogy with development communication focused on environment and development challenges in rural agricultural communities in sub-Saharan Africa. He holds a Masters degree in directing and Performing Arts Practice and is particularly interested in cultural policy and development management. He writes essays, plays, poetry, short stories and his articles have appeared in local and international publication

8. The Public Program as a Performative Curatorial Act:

Audience engagement, experimental pedagogy and performance in self-initiated art institutions in the Middle East and North Africa

Valerio Del Baglivo, independent curator & doctoral candidate at Middlesex University

Abstract: This intervention derives from my PhD Research and is focused on the relevant phenomenon of curatorial-run spaces in the MENA Region (Middle East and North Africa). These spaces are currently proposing experimental combinations of performance programs, educational activities (such as workshops, conferences, lectures, etc.) and non-content events (such as dinners, parties, etc.) as a ground-breaking tool for a meaningful cultural impact on local communities.

The objective of this paper is to classify the role of performative components in curatorial practices and specifically to identify the notion of the ‘public program’ as a performative curatorial strategy per se. By describing the activity of certain curatorial-spaces in the MENA Region, my paper aims specifically to understand whether the combination of education-centered events – such as lectures, talks, workshops – with performative-driven elements, can favor innovative participative curatorial approaches.

From a critical point of view this research starts by considering *New Institutionalism* debate developed in Europe within the last twenty years. *New Institutionalism* promoted an idea of Art Institutions as active centres for participatory discussions on social and political urgent issues, rather than spaces for passive cultural consumption. The recent rising of nationalistic policies in Europe caused the shut down of some key-institutions and the decline of any critical institutional approach. Moreover, in my opinion, the debate failed in that it considered only the museum as the designated place for the presentation and fruition of contemporary art. The fall of *New Institutionalism* in Europe highlights the southern part of the hemisphere, where a lack of institutional infrastructures gave the rise to independent curatorial initiatives. In the MENA Region a series of curatorial-run spaces (such as for example *98weeks* in Beirut, *ArtSchool Palestine* in Ramallah, *Beirut* in Cairo, *Mass* in Alexandria and *Appartement 22* in Rabat) are now achieving quasi-institutional status, providing events or process-based works that produce constant shifts in visitor behaviour, back and forth between reception and participation.

As the title of my paper title indicates, I will try to classify the role of performative components in curatorial practices and specifically to identify the notion of a ‘public program’ as a performative curatorial strategy per se. As a curator, I am not interested in performing arts curation, but rather in performance as a form of curation. As well, I am not interested in art education but rather in education as art/curating. And so, I am interested in how certain inner elements of performance practice and certain elements of pedagogy can be used to generate curatorial projects. By going back to the *New Institutionalism* debate and describing the activity of some curatorial spaces in the MENA Region (Middle East and North Africa), my specific

aims will be to understand whether the combination of education-centered events—such as lectures, talks, workshops—with performative-driven elements can favour innovative participative curatorial approaches.

The PhD research project: curatorial-run spaces in the MENA region

This paper derives from my PhD Research at Middlesex University London, which is focused on the phenomenon of curatorial-run spaces in the MENA Region (Middle East and North Africa). I am particularly interested in spaces that are currently proposing experimental combinations of performance programs and educational activities (such as workshops, conferences, lectures, etc.) as a ground breaking tool for a meaningful cultural impact on local communities. This includes notions as the pluralisation of cultural debate, new forms of internationalism and transnational cultural practices, the spirit of action and forms of agency in marginalized contexts, and the role of curatorial practice in relation to cultural identity and difference.

This research project began an analysis of the curatorial theories known as *New Institutionalism*, which focus on the function of art institutions as active sites of cultural critique, part “community centre, laboratory and academy”, as stated in the mission of the *Rooseum* of Malmö (Esche, 2004, para. 9), one of the most active centres in this field. *New Institutionalism* promoted an idea of institutions as spaces for dialogue and participation, rather than showrooms for passive consumption theories, and was developed throughout the 1990s by a heterogeneous group of curators in Europe (among whom it is worth mentioning Charles Esche, Maria Lind, Jens Hoffmann and Jonas Ekeberg). These debates were left unfinished due to the recent policy of cutting funds and aligning to the commercial parameters of the creative industries, to which cultural institutions are currently subjugated.

Curator Claire Doherty (2006) affirms that what distinguished the materialization of *New Institutionalism* in the 1990s was the convergence of three key factors: (1) the appearance of relational and/or socially-engaged practices, which take their place as dominant strands of mainstream contemporary visual art through theoretical discourse and social networks; (2) cultural experience becoming recognised as a primary component of urban regeneration; and (3)

(perhaps most significantly) the emergence of a generation of nomadic curators and artists, through whom new experimental models of presentation are circulated and exchanged. Yet, Doherty forgot to mention the rise of artist-run spaces as a new model for cultural production. It is Simon Sheikh (2012) who firstly made this important historical connection in his text *Burning From the Inside*. The curator and institutions putting this into practice borrowed techniques and theories from the Institutional Critique and at the same time from artist-run spaces. What they did was to give life to self-critical meditations on the functioning, organisation, and administrative structure in addition to the objectives and programming of the institutions themselves. Curator Charles Esche (2004, para. 7), former director of Malmö's *Rooseum* and current director of the *Van Abben Museum* in Eindhoven and art critic Brian Holmes (2006, para. 5) agree that in the era of the decline of the welfare state, art institutions should become social centres for discussing current political and social themes.

This climate of passionate cultural debate around the role and critical functions of the art institution—which animated curatorial practices in Europe for almost twenty years (from the early 'nineties until the second half of the past decade)—was abruptly interrupted by the arrival of the economic crisis, which caused the decline of the welfare state and the advent of nationalist policies not really prone to accepting positions of cultural criticality. Yet more than this, I believe that the New Institutionalism failed also in that it kept the museum as the only designated place for the presentation and fruition of contemporary art. My research aims to verify whether it is possible to continue an analysis of art institutions as places where new experimental forms of curating activate a critical debate on the contemporary society, by simply shifting the attention from Europe to the south of the Mediterranean, in the region known as MENA (Middle East and North Africa)?

As Nina Möntmann claimed in her text *The Rise and Fall of New Institutionalism: Perspectives on a Possible Future* (2007), the world's southern hemisphere offers many causes for reflection: the lack of access to institutional facilities and public funds has given life to “community projects, which are characterized by their institution-forming character” (para. 6). Groups of young artists and curators with different backgrounds have gathered together to open spaces of civic association, which in only a few years develop from being informal places of

cultural promotion to being subjects able to propose a programme that have become recognised at an international level. This sort of spirit of action and form of agency sometimes distinguishes contexts characterized by a lack of sources. This is especially apparent in the region of MENA, where a series of curatorially-run spaces started their activity in the same years in which *New Institutionalism* became established (from 1992 up to now). *98weeks* in Beirut, *ArtSchool Palestine* in Ramallah, *Beirut* in Cairo, *Mass* in Alexandria, *Appartement 22* in Rabat, *Makan Art Space* in Amman, and *Oda Projesi* in Istanbul, and many others propose experimental public programmes that are able to combine participatory cultural activities and innovative educational projects. The spaces delineated in this first provisional list are characterized by their hybrid forms and experimental programmes. In particular, these spaces:

- base the majority of their programming on dialogical forms such as talks, lectures, discussions, etcetera;
- organize artist residencies or educational programmes (semi-permanent like in the case of *Artschool Palestine*, *MASS*, *Ashkal Alwan*, or sporadic, like in the case of *98Weeks* and *Beirut*);
- keep archives for the promotion of local art;
- have the capability to raise global funds and international expertise.

In other words, in a relatively short time, these places have attained an almost institutional status and, as in the case of the newly-born *Beirut* in Cairo, are promoting a clear critical debate on the function of art institutions at an international level (similar to debates that happened about ten years ago in Europe).

The notion of the ‘public program’

This second section is focused on the idea of ‘the public program’ as a curatorial practice, which sometimes assumes performative characteristics. We have seen that *New Institutionalism* defined New Institutions as spaces for dialogue and participation rather than showrooms for passive consumption. The curatorially-run spaces mentioned above also produced very similar models using their spaces for community activities.

Yet, what are the characteristics of the cultural programs promoted by these new institutions that transform them into something different? Did they really abandon conventional

programming and exhibition making as we know it? If yes, what kind of qualities might these public programs have in order to favour innovative participative curatorial approaches and so become critical institutions? There is a very simple answer: they did so by employing two elements that are very important in performance art practice: time and social context. In fact, *New Institutionalism* reformulated the idea of institutions by producing mainly event-based, process-based, or long-term research programs that favoured shifts in visitor behaviour back and forth between reception and participation.

How did they do this? Artist Pablo Helguera is one of the key figures in the field of socially engaged art practice, and Head of the Education Department at MOMA (the Museum of Modern Art in New York City), genially explains this in his text *Alternative Audience and Instant Time* (the public program as an alternative space) (Helguera, 2010). He says, and I agree, that Public Programs generally fall in two distinctive “genres”: Artistic Public Programmes, such as performances or screenings, and educational Public Programmes such as talks, conferences workshops (p. 26). He also proposes a third possibility that is a combination of the two, in addition to another aspect he calls the “non-content element” such as a party, a dinner, entertainment and informal structures, and so on (ibid.). If in fact the educational element rewards the audience with personal advancement, the performative aspect can favour (through such practices as, for example, role playing, enacting certain social rituals, or the sharing of personal elements) a different kind of audience engagement. Finally the third non-content element emphasizes a sense of communion.

This latter combination is exactly what characterizes some experimental programs in the curatorial spaces in the MENA region.

Two examples of public programs

In the following section I will describe two examples of public programs in order to explain how performative elements and pedagogical aspects have been applied to favour this kind of engagement in the practices of curatorial-run spaces.

98weeks

The *98weeks* research project is an artists’ organization and space founded by Marwa and

Mirene Arsanios in 2007 in Beirut. It was conceived as a research project that shifts its attention to a new topic every 98 weeks. Combining theory and practice, *98weeks* proposes research that is an open-ended activity, involving collaboration and an inter-disciplinary approach to art making. *98weeks'* projects take multiple forms, such as workshops, talks, screenings, seminars, reading groups, publications and exhibitions. For example, there have been Cabaret Nights in which audiences can bring their own texts to read, and can actually interpret and perform them. In view of Helgùera's (2006) analysis, the cabaret is the non-content aspect while the stand up part of the event represents the performative aspect, and the choice of texts becomes a kind of evening's bibliography—i.e it represents the educational output. The Cabaret Night is a way to reinterpret the boring format of a reading group in a different way without avoiding the provision of a constructive learning experience.

Apartment 22

In 2002, thanks to curator Abdellah Karroum, the curatorial run space *Apartment 22* started its activity of promotion of Moroccan art and exchange with other realities through a dense programme of residencies in the city of Rabat. In 2007, it also became *RadioApartment22 (R22)*, a radio station for discussing themes linked to culture in Morocco. *R22* became Morocco's first radio station dedicated to contemporary cultural and artistic practice, and aimed to expand the space of the small apartment and to disseminate these kinds of ideas on air. It is dedicated not only to conferences, but also to audio and radio works often broadcasted live. Once again, it is a curatorial platform that combines education and performative praxis.

Conclusion

And so in conclusion, it is precisely by way of combining education-centered events—such as lectures, talks, or workshops—with performative-driven elements, that these Public Programs have favoured innovative participative curatorial approaches and therefore reconsider the functioning of institutions on a local basis in a social public space.

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Biography

Valerio Del Baglivo is a freelance curator, educator and perennial collaborator based in Italy. He is now attending a PhD Programme at Middlesex University with a research focused on public engagement and experimental pedagogy in self-initiated art institutions. Collaborative research, activism, alternative education, gatherings, minor narratives and the politics of hospitality play a continuing and vital role within the methodology and interests of Valerio Del Baglivo. In the last years he promoted public programmes aiming at understanding whether the combination of education-centered events—such as lectures, talks, workshops—with performative-driven elements can favor innovative participative curatorial approaches.

9. Las política y estéticas de la curaduría del performance en Puerto Rico: de la práctica al discurso/ “The Politics and Aesthetics of Curating Performance in Puerto Rico: From Practice to Discourse”

Awilda Rodríguez Lora & Marielys Burgos Meléndez

Abstract: Puerto Rico has an extended history in the creation and presentation of experimental time based art (dance, performance, theatre, and video). Many local artists/teachers, also mentors and colleagues, are currently questioning what is Performance in Puerto Rico and how it is curated. In our intention to further these conversations, we investigate: how are the socio-economic and political contexts impacting the curatorial practice on the island; what are the roles of artists/performers in curating performances; and where have performances been taking place? ‘La Diaspora’ or the diaspora stands as an influential element of the Puerto Rican performance aesthetics. In order to explain how the ‘vaivén’ intrinsic to diasporic realities, influence the curatorial practice of performance in Puerto Rico we pay particular attention to some artistic endeavors that have taken place in Puerto Rico between 1980’s to present days. From a phenomenological perspective, we document and analyze people’s experiences, events and spaces such as: *Danza Con Tacto* (Gloria Llompart: 80’s-90’s), *Spookyricans/Spookiricua* (Eduardo Alegria 90s NYC/Puerto Rico), and *D’Chamacas* (Awilda Rodríguez Lora 2000’s).

In this paper, we position ourselves as practicing artists and curators who navigate in the transnational relation between Puerto Rico/USA, to provide an embodied and contextualized perspective on the aforementioned matters. In addition, through joint paper we will discuss how the fluidity of space/time provided by the diaspora and the fluidity of ‘el vaivén’ informs our own creative practice.

Awilda hands out balloons to the audience and she tells them: “Before we start we are going to ask you to blow up some balloons why not as we can’t talk about curating performance without some audience participation?”

Marielys: Hi I’m Marielys ‘aka’ La Jeva and her/my name is Awilda ‘aka’ La Performera. We are both artists/producers/researchers and facilitators—an ‘all in one’ let’s say—and we are here ‘to perform’. While there might be—or not—the expectation to read a ‘paper’ about the politics and aesthetics of curating performance in Puerto Rico we will mostly do so by sharing our experiences as artists/researchers in the Puerto Rican context. This we do recognizing it has been a complex quest of identifying resources, archiving and synchronizing efforts, which in Puerto Rico is in itself an arduous task. We would like to present this as what it is, a work that is still in process and which requires a constant critical self-reflection of our ‘role’ within this work—for we are part of it as active ‘doers’/participants.

Bodily experience- and corporeality stands as a first hand ‘source’, which we claim fundamental to understanding this work. By the hand of experience comes oral history—meaning anecdotes, memories, or storytelling, formally gathered or informally shared off the record—as a strategy for us to recover and share our experiences, but also to collect and re-collect the experiences of the artists that are part of this project. The creative practice stands also as a core element of this investigations and by creative practice we mean and ongoing action/intention to creatively ‘achieve something’ working within the context and its limitations/resources to take most of it and propose ‘something else’. In the process of doing this we have embraced uncertainty and allow new discoveries to change the direction of this work. Hence, improvisation expresses at is most as a very rigorous methodology ingrained in the body and experience itself, as a cultural element that manifest almost in every aspect of our life and which keeps nurturing our capacity to trust what we know and make decisions honoring that bodily knowledge/experience.

Awilda: With all that said is important to clarify where do we come from, as individuals and as collaborators. Marielys and I are both currently living/working/practicing in Puerto Rico which most of you might know—or perhaps don’t—is an island on the Caribbean Sea and a colony of the United States of America since 1898. We share the same currency, the same federal regulations, and citizenship, among other things, but we have a local administration—which is not autonomous even though people like to think it is—, a different language, a specific history of colonization and a very different culture/or cultural expression. We both agree that the relationship between Puerto Rico and the USA is extremely complex and while we are not experts in the subject it just takes brief look at history to understand the segregation, exclusion and oppression which Puerto Ricans have lived/experience as part of this political, economic, relation. As artists, particularly independent experimental artists, we are extremely aware of this relation and how it affects our work—including this paper—and our decisions. It is from this critical awareness that we start digging in: What is curating performance in Puerto Rico; how does it look like, and what does it propose.

First of all, it is through our own work and through the unknown legacy of many artists that we have come to realize that the practice of ‘curating’ performance in Puerto Rico have been

taking place for many years, for the limitations imposed by the contexts determines—in many ways—the political choices made while creating/presenting performance. However, we understand that ‘curating’ or ‘curation’ is a highly loaded term and we are not interested in circumscribing to any definition of the subject we might have encounter; instead, our interest is to highlight the work that diverse independent artists have been carrying on. Second, we aimed to pay attention to the specificities of making art in Puerto Rico, which have demands that the artists/performers become themselves the ‘curator’ in order to show/share their work. Along with this, we think it is important to embrace the ongoing/moving/fluctuating circumstances that surround us. Therefore, ‘diaspora’ stood up as a metaphor for describing that fluctuated state of being (here and there), and the ‘relative’ easiness with which we, as Puerto Ricans, could and can relocate—not without problematizing this situation. This fluctuating state of being is particularly important for ourselves and the artists we have spoken to who have moved outside Puerto Rico, mostly in New York. From that dislocated experiences of relocation, we have questioned our cultural identities as Puerto Ricans inside/outside the island, our sexualities, our fears, our artistry, our history and the context itself of the island.

Marielys: We decided to pay attention to some experimental/contemporary artists and specific works/initiatives they have developed. These artists are Eduardo Alegría, Gloria Llompart and Awilda herself (myself). While some of them do not necessarily consider themselves to be performers, performance artists, or curators, they share: (1) the use of their bodies in space as a motor of their work, (2) their interest in creating/sharing a common experience along with spectators, (3) their critical vision about the place they come from and its history, (4) the circumstances in which they have decided to carry on their work, and (5) their awareness of the political impact of their work.

Artists, choreographer, and composer Eduardo Alegría, for example, describes himself as an ‘embelequero’, or an artist that finds inspiration on the multiple manifestations of life that surrounds him. He developed a two-part piece entitled *Spookirican*, which premiered in 1997 at PS 122 in NYC. Eduardo directed and choreographed the two sections of the work—*Tereketes 7* and *Bus Boy Love*—that explored the Puerto Rican identity/nationalism and other personal processes such a nervous breakdown, all the result of the change of contexts and his diasporic

process. For him, *Spookirican* or *Spookiricua* (as it is called in Spanish) emerged as part of his reality as a white Puerto Rican gay man living in ‘The CITY’.

Awilda: Gloria Llompart is an artist, improviser and yogi. Her work *Danza Con Tacto* (*Dance with Contact*) comes from her exploration of the human body and its relationship to other bodies. *Danza Con Tacto*, which started in the 80’s finished in the 90’s, was a collective of dancers that worked specifically on duets under Llompart’s direction. Each duet dealt with a particular aspect of human interaction. After a visit to Cuba where she witnessed Caribbean dancers doing contact improvisation, she felt inspired and with the need to do this work in Puerto Rico (her home). This was a labor of fifteen years and *Danza Con Tacto* had the opportunity to travel outside of Puerto Rico to present their explorations. She then returned to the United States to continue her creative movement practice and complete a Masters in Multimedia Performance at Brooklyn College. Through her work, she continues to dig into the complex beauty of the human and its surroundings.

The third artists interviewed for the project was myself, Awilda, who, along with Damaris Estrada, produced *D’Chamacas*, an interdisciplinary event that intersects performance art, visual art (photography, installation, painting), dance, theater, live music and DJs music. This event, founded in 2011, emerged from our mutual need to create a space where female artists could showcase their work free of censorship. While living in New York City during the late 90’s and early 2000’s, I experienced and participated in diverse parties, venues, events where artistry was celebrated. These spaces merged creative presentations in a hangout/social environment where people gathered to dance, celebrate, meet other artists and create personal and professional networks. Hence *D’Chamacas* aimed to encourage a community-based environment providing a platform for audience and artists to ‘be themselves’ while experiencing how the individual embraces the collective queer space. Our intention was to ‘design’ a space where vulnerability and freedom stood as departure points for people to relate to one another.

Marielys: There are many artists that, like Eduardo, Gloria, and Awilda, are part of this constant flow of creating and producing work regardless of the challenges of the contexts. As Puerto Rican artists, we are an ‘all-in-one’ package ‘phenomenon’: we are artists, producers, teachers,

shakers, cultural entrepreneurs, activists, educators, more by accident than by choice. Therefore, in order to make the work happen, we have to embrace that ‘embelequero’ identity that Eduardo embraces. So the story goes for us, in order to be here in Montreal speaking about the nature/context of making art in Puerto Rico, we not only had to put our effort into the intended research, but we also had to figure out how the fuck we were going to get to Montreal to share our findings.

Both: In our need to move/search/find resources to travel we created a fundraising event called *BRUNCH PERFORMANCE*, an invitation for people to sponsor our work.

BRUNCH PERFORMANCE is a bi monthly interactive dining and performance experience that we curated and performed together. Twice a month, we invite people to come into our homes, where we share with them food and ‘entertain’ them for two hours. The menu, the music, and the ambiance was carefully crafted: we used mostly local produce to prepare the food, created a particular playlist with Puerto Rican cultural references from the 90’s, and decorated our living rooms with a communal table to receive our guests. The *BRUNCH PERFORMANCE* is a celebration in itself and it finishes with the celebration of someone’s birthday—even if he/she doesn’t know is his/her birthday. Reservation to the *BRUNCH PERFORMANCE* is a must, since we unfortunately cannot serve more than ten guests at a given event. The admission/donation is twenty-five dollars per person.

Each *BRUNCH PERFORMANCE* is different. While specific interventions are planned ahead of time, the event is a structured improvisation. The dialogue, the order of interventions, and the interaction with audience emerges from our relation to the audience. La Jeva and La Performera are the hosts of the *BRUNCH PERFORMANCE*; more than characters, they are alter egos, enactments of permisivity that invite the audience to let go their assumptions of who they are and who should they be. Along with audience we dance, laugh, drink, eat and transform our living rooms in a space where ‘anything can happen’, without restrictions.¹

Jashtagueateesta



 **laperformera**
 #eldubiaotronivel
 #brunchperformance
 #brunchjanguero

 **laperformera**
 Buenos días! Good morning!
 #brunchperformance
 #bruncheteateesta
 #brunchjanguero#eldubi #...

 **roxyheart5**
 #1 Primer round
 #desayumuerzo #janguero
 #brunch #today #healthy
 #foodporn #lelylandia #frui...



Marielys: Entendemos que es a partir del cuerpo en movimiento y de la traslación que surgen estas necesidades de crear espacios en el que quepan nuevas formas de hacer –hacerse- arte, de entenderse, de establecer relaciones interpersonales a través de la práctica. Esto se manifiesta en sí mismo a través del proceso creativo en el que se establecen unos vínculos que trascienden espacios/geográficos delimitando nuevas formas de relacionarse con el/la otra, que en el caso del *BRUNCH PERFORMANCE*, se manifiesta con la creación de un espacio íntimo en nuestro hogar en el que los/las involucradas puedan re-establecer unas ‘pautas’ de interacciones, a partir del absurdo y de la despersonalización, sino también con ellos y la permisividad que se dan así mismos para hacerse.

...Awilda translates... In conclusion, we had to do ‘the work’ in order to be here, and now that we are here we will continue moving forward doing ‘the work’. The experience in creating/curating and performing the *BRUNCH PERFORMANCE* has informed our understanding of what it is to curate/create here/now in Puerto Rico. Then our plan is to continue our research embracing the practical/performative aspect of our project, while understanding the importance of talking, writing, documenting and archiving it. In doing so, we acknowledge (1) the body and the voice, (2) the body as a voice, and (3) the historicity in the act of doing.

We do performance Delivery!!!

Contact us: marielysburgos@yahoo.com emailawilda@gmail.com

¹ To learn more about the *BRUNCH PERFORMANCE* visit: <http://brunchconmarielysyawilda.blogspot.com/> or check out the following hashtags on Instagram: #eldubiaotronivel #brunchperformance #brunchjanguero #brunchperformance #bruncheteateesta #brunchjanguero #eldubi #dubiparty #lajeva #laperformera #eldiadelsenor

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Biographies

Marielys Burgos-Meléndez, MA, is an independent artist/researcher, and cultural entrepreneur from Puerto Rico. She earned her MA in Dance Studies from SUNY/Brockport focusing on dance history and aesthetics. Her endeavors are based on interdisciplinarity, collaborations, and auto-sustainability. Marielys has ongoing professional relationships with diverse platforms such as *Axolotl Plataforma Cultural* (Mexico) and *La Rosario Residencia de Artistas y Gestores*

(Puerto Rico). She is also the founder of CIIPAE-Puerto Rico (*Centro de Investigación Interdisciplinaria de Performance y Artes Escénicas*).

Awilda Rodríguez Lora, is an artist, curator, and facilitator committed in supporting experimental art that ignites progressive conversations around gender, sexuality, and race. Her work is rooted in actions and mobilizations as initiators of transformation. She has a Master in Arts Management from Columbia College Chicago and is currently living in Puerto Rico where she curates cultural events to support emerging and established artists. laperformera.org

10. Le travail du commissaire-musicien d'après la notion de « scénario de concert »

Marie-Hélène Breault, Post doctorante à Matralab/Université Concordia/FRQSC

Résumé : Cette communication s'intéresse au commissariat musical dans le contexte de la production des musiques de création au Québec, en prenant en compte l'expérience de l'auteure à titre de directrice artistique de l'organisme de production de concerts contemporains Erreur de type 27 (E27). Le contexte du concert, comme mode de présentation des œuvres musicales privilégié dans le domaine de la musique contemporaine, est d'abord situé. Les limites du concert en tant que rituel et les remises en question qui l'affecte actuellement sont ensuite abordées. Puis, le profil, les rôles et la formation du commissaire-musicien sont étudiés. Enfin, la notion de « scénario de concert » est expliquée et un exemple tiré de la programmation d'E27 est présenté.

Introduction

Entre 2008 et 2013, j'ai été directrice générale et artistique d'un organisme de production de concerts contemporains nommé Erreur de type 27 (E27) (2014).¹ Bien que le terme « commissaire » ait été absent de la définition de ce titre, je me suis vite rendue compte, en prenant acte de quelques définitions du rôle du commissaire,² que plusieurs des tâches que j'ai effectuées dans le cadre des productions de cet organisme s'apparentent au commissariat. J'ai donc été interpellée par l'appel de communications lancé pour ce symposium et c'est avec plaisir que je vous présente cette communication qui traite du travail du commissaire-musicien d'après une notion particulière avec laquelle je travaille depuis quelques années, soit la notion de « scénario de concert ».

Cette communication s'intéressera au commissariat musical dans le contexte de la production des musiques de création au Québec. Elle comportera cinq sections distinctes. D'abord, je présenterai le contexte particulier auquel cette communication s'intéresse, soit celui du concert, comme mode de présentation des œuvres musicales privilégié dans le domaine de la musique contemporaine. Je traiterai ensuite des limites du concert en tant que rituel et des remises en question qui l'affecte actuellement. Puis, je m'intéresserai plus spécifiquement au commissaire-musicien, à son profil, à ses divers rôles de même qu'à sa formation. Par la suite, j'expliquerai la notion de « scénario de concert » et j'indiquerai en quoi cette notion peut apporter des solutions aux remises en questions entourant actuellement le rituel concertant dans le milieu de la musique contemporaine. En guise de conclusion, je présenterai un exemple de « scénario de concert » tiré de la programmation d'E27.

Le concert contemporain : un rituel en évolution

Bien qu'il présente des œuvres relativement nouvelles au public, le concert contemporain est un mode de présentation qui partage les codes du concert classique, qui sont issus de la tradition symphonique et qui prennent racine dans les siècles passés. Ces codes, qui concernent aussi bien les musiciens que le public, comprennent :

Musiciens :

- Le port d'un « uniforme » : vêtements noirs et neutres (robes ou jupes longues, hauts à manches longues pour les femmes, complet pour les hommes) ;
- L'émission du *la* par le premier hautbois, habituellement sur le signal du violon solo ;
- La chorégraphie des musiciens et du chef d'orchestre entre les œuvres (les musiciens se lèvent lorsque le chef d'orchestre entre en scène et se rassoient une fois celui-ci à son pupitre) ;
- La communication verbale des musiciens avec le public absente ou restreinte pendant le déroulement du concert.

Public :

- L'interdiction de faire du bruit ou de parler pendant l'exécution des œuvres ;
- La consigne de réserver les applaudissements à la fin des œuvres et non entre les mouvements des œuvres.

Dans le domaine de la musique de concert du passé comme dans le domaine de la musique contemporaine ou de création, diverses initiatives visant à « démocratiser » la musique de tradition classique et à revitaliser le rituel du concert afin de rejoindre un plus vaste public sont mises en place. À titre d'exemples, mentionnons, en musique classique, la diffusion sur grand écran à l'extérieur de la Place de Arts d'interprétations de « canons » symphoniques du XIX^e siècle par l'Orchestre symphonique de Montréal³; et en musique contemporaine, les concerts incluant une dimension multidisciplinaire (vidéo, cirque) mis en place par Véronique Lacroix et l'Ensemble contemporain de Montréal⁴. Le questionnement sur le rituel du concert est donc au cœur des préoccupations des organismes de productions de concerts, sans oublier les

artistes. À cet effet, le volume 20, numéro 1-2 du périodique *Circuit-musiques contemporaines*, publié par les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, présente une enquête sur l'avenir de la musique contemporaine, dans le cadre de laquelle diverses questions étaient posées à des artistes œuvrant dans le milieu. L'une de ces questions se lisait comme suit : « Comment le rituel du concert évoluera-t-il ? Doit-il évoluer ? » (Goldman, J., Beaucage et collab., 2010, p. 92). Une grande variété de réponses a été obtenue.

Le compositeur et auteur Nicolas Gilbert souligne notamment la nécessité d'un « intermédiaire », d'un « passeur culturel » entre les citoyens et les œuvres musicales. Il affirme :

[...] lorsque les œuvres ne se laissent pas apprivoiser facilement, comme c'est souvent le cas en musique contemporaine, l'étape de la transmission est cruciale : les œuvres doivent être présentées et encadrées, l'auditeur doit être préparé, mis en contexte et souvent amadoué d'une façon ou d'une autre. Je ne crois pas qu'il soit raisonnable de croire que les citoyens en général se dirigent naturellement vers les musiques nouvelles (Goldman, J., Beaucage et collab., 2010, p. 97).

Pour la flûtiste, improvisatrice et compositrice Cléo Palacio-Quintin, l'interdisciplinarité permet de faire éclater les conventions du concert, tout en attirant potentiellement de nouveaux publics. (Goldman, J., Beaucage et collab., 2010, p. 100). Dans la même veine, le compositeur Hèctor Parra affirme :

[...] l'un des objectifs de la jeune génération de créateurs est d'atteindre une convergence expressive capable d'intégrer dans une expérience unique et intense des expressions sonores, visuelles, verbales et conceptuelles issues de couches culturelles différentes et même opposées. Les relations de symbiose tissées entre ces éléments artistiques favorisent une attitude d'intégration, capable d'aider l'émergence de nouveaux publics plus ouverts au futur et plus perméables à des propositions nouvelles et risquées (Goldman, J., Beaucage et collab., 2010, p. 100).

Certains artistes abordent la question des lieux dans lesquels sont présentées les nouvelles musiques. Dans cette optique, Detlef Heusinger, le directeur artistique du EXPERIMENTALSTUDIO du SWR, en Allemagne, remet en question la prédominance de la scène frontale, qui n'est, selon lui, pas adéquate pour des productions « ambitieuses » de musique contemporaine (Goldman, J., Beaucage et collab., 2010, p. 106). Pour Luca Francesconi, compositeur et directeur artistique de la Biennale Musica, à Venise, la salle de

concert telle que nous la connaissons est redondante, bien que ça ne soit pas le cas du concert en tant que tel (Goldman, J., Beaucage et collab., 2010, p. 127). Dans la même veine, le compositeur et pianiste Morritz Eggert entrevoit le concert du futur comme un événement social se démarquant de l'acte d'écouter de la musique à l'ordinateur (Goldman, J., Beaucage et collab., 2010, p. 114).

Pour ma part, j'avais répondu à cette question—« Comment le rituel du concert évoluera-t-il ? Doit-il évoluer ? » (Goldman, J., Beaucage et collab., 2010, p. 110, p. 92)—en citant une remarque d'un agent d'un organisme subventionnaire avec qui je me suis entretenu, quelques mois après avoir commencé à gérer E27, en 2009. Cet agent m'avait ainsi conseillé :

« Vous savez, en musique contemporaine, on ne peut plus juste faire des concerts pour faire des concerts : il doit se passer quelque chose de spécial » (Goldman, J., Beaucage et collab., 2010, p. 110). Une telle remarque témoigne de l'importance accordée, dans le processus d'évaluation des organismes subventionnaires qui soutiennent les organismes de production de concerts contemporains, à la diffusion des œuvres, à la manière dont celles-ci sont présentées et à l'impact qu'elles ont sur le public. À titre d'exemple, au Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec (CALQ), dans les programmes de fonctionnement des organismes de production de concert, 30% de la note globale attribuée à l'organisme concerne la diffusion et le rayonnement (Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec, 2014). Les critères du CALQ permettant de déterminer si un organisme a une diffusion et un rayonnement satisfaisant concernent d'abord le nombre de productions et de représentations et l'importance de la fréquentation. Cependant, l'importance et la pertinence des activités d'animation et de sensibilisation des publics est aussi prise en compte, tout comme la cohérence entre les objectifs établis par l'organisme et les stratégies de communication, de mise en marché et de développement et l'importance du rayonnement de l'organisme, mesurable, selon le CALQ, par la présence publique et l'obtention de reconnaissances, mais aussi par l'impact sur le milieu. Plusieurs des critères d'évaluation du CALQ concernent donc des tâches de type « commissariat » (animation et sensibilisation du public, stratégies de communication, impact dans le milieu, etc.). Par ailleurs, dans les critères d'évaluation du programme de subvention de fonctionnement pour les organismes de production de concerts du Conseil des Arts du Canada, l'incidence de l'œuvre sur le public est prise en

compte dans le processus d'évaluation et 20% de la note globale attribuée à l'organisme concerne le développement de public et le rayonnement de l'organisme (Conseil des Arts du Canada, 2014).

Que retenir de ces mots d'artistes et des orientations des subventionnaires ? Tout d'abord, plusieurs artistes déplorent caractère archaïque du concert conventionnel comme mode de présentation des œuvres musicales. Dans la même veine, on souligne aussi sa relative inaptitude, dans sa forme conventionnelle, à instaurer un climat apte à favoriser l'appréciation des œuvres contemporaines chez l'auditeur et à présenter des œuvres contemporaines d'envergure, soit des œuvres dont la structure dépasse la forme de présentation classique. Plusieurs musiciens souhaitent en outre un renouvellement de la forme du concert, renouvellement axé sur une approche interdisciplinaire comprenant une intégration inter-artistique qui dépasse le niveau de la simple juxtaposition et sur la création de nouvelles formules de concert où le lien avec le public, la communication entre les musiciens et les auditeurs sont mis de l'avant. Chez les subventionnaires, on s'attend par ailleurs à ce que les organismes de production de concerts intègrent à leur programmation non seulement des activités visant à présenter des œuvres (les concerts en tant que tels), mais aussi d'autres types d'activités en périphérie des concerts, dans l'optique de créer des liens avec le public.

Le profil du commissaire-musicien

Au Québec, dans la plupart des organismes producteurs de concerts contemporains, on ne retrouve pas de poste de « commissaire » à proprement parler. Par ailleurs, l'utilisation de cette expression étant relativement récente dans le domaine des arts de la scène, peu de musiciens s'en réclament. Cela ne signifie cependant pas que des tâches de type « commissariat » ne soient accomplies. Seulement, elles le sont généralement par les personnes qui occupent officiellement d'autres fonctions au sein des organismes. Dans le cadre de cette communication, j'ai choisi de considérer la scène québécoise, plus particulièrement les organismes membres du Vivier, un diffuseur spécialisé établi à Montréal et formé de l'association d'une trentaine d'ensembles et d'organismes musicaux. Le Vivier se donne pour mission de « favoriser le développement des musiques nouvelles et d'offrir à tous, par la diffusion d'œuvres de qualité, une porte ouverte sur la culture » (Groupe Le Vivier, 2014). Dans la plupart des organismes membres du Vivier, les

tâches commissariales sont accomplies par le directeur artistique et les musiciens. De plus, dans le cas de plusieurs de ces organismes, plus particulièrement lorsqu'il s'agit d'ensembles, les postes de direction artistique sont souvent occupés par des musiciens de l'ensemble. C'est en partie pour cette raison que j'emploie l'expression « commissaire-musicien », puisque très souvent, le commissariat en musique nouvelle de concert est réalisé par des musiciens multifonctionnels dont le rôle dépasse largement celui de l'exécutant.

Les tâches du commissaire-musicien

Dans ce contexte, les tâches du commissaire-musicien comprennent habituellement :

- Le choix des compositeurs, des œuvres présentées et des interprètes ;
- Le choix des lieux de présentation ;
- La conception des modes de présentation des œuvres ;
- L'explication et la mise en contexte des œuvres présentées ;
- Et l'accueil et l'accompagnement de l'auditeur.

De ce bref recensement, une question surgit : « Y a-t-il lieu de distinguer entre le rôle du directeur artistique et celui du commissaire? » Selon mon point de vue, cette distinction est souhaitable pour marquer l'existence du partage des tâches qui caractérise le mode de fonctionnement de plusieurs ensembles de musique contemporaine entre, d'une part, le directeur artistique, et d'autre part, des musiciens multifonctionnels. Je propose donc cette distinction : la direction artistique concernerait davantage les choix qui touchent à la vision artistique globale d'un organisme, soit ses orientations et objectifs artistiques généraux, tandis que le commissariat toucherait plutôt aux choix effectués à l'échelle des événements artistiques présentés, soit les concerts et les activités périphériques (conférences, classes de maître, ateliers, rencontres avec le public, etc.).

La formation du commissaire-musicien

Au sein des organismes de production de concerts, les tâches commissariales sont souvent effectuées par des musiciens dotés de diplômes d'études supérieures en pratique artistique (interprétation ou composition), en musicologie, en communication ou en gestion. Dans les facultés de musique au Québec, il n'y a actuellement pas de programme pour apprendre

à devenir commissaire-musicien. Cependant, dans le domaine académique musical, plusieurs universitaires sont tout de même conscients de l'importance de donner une formation plus complète aux musiciens, qui ferait d'eux des interprètes ou des compositeurs, mais également des « développeurs culturels » ou des « agents musicaux », pour reprendre les termes avancés par Sophie Stévançe et Serge Lacasse dans un ouvrage intitulé *Les enjeux de la recherche-crédation en musique*, paru aux Presses de l'Université Laval en 2013. Ces auteurs affirment : « À une époque où les aptitudes interdisciplinaires sont désormais essentielles, les étudiants que nous formons ne devraient-ils pas être sensibilisés à leur rôle de développeur culturel (les publics n'étant plus uniformes, ni automatiquement acquis) [...] » (Stévançe et Lacasse, 2013, p. 21). Ils soulignent en outre l'importance de « prendre en compte davantage les autres aspects du métier qui occupent une part si importante dans la pratique (communication, gestion, conception, recherche, technologies, médias)? » (Stévançe et Lacasse, 2013, p. 21).

La notion de « scénario de concert »⁵

Dans sa forme conventionnelle, souvent pratiquée dans le milieu de la musique contemporaine, le concert fait entendre une sélection d'œuvres qui n'ont pas nécessairement de liens entre elles. Comme nous l'avons vu précédemment, dans le point sur le rituel du concert, ce mode de présentation des œuvres musicales donne lieu à des critiques, tant du côté des artistes que de celui des subventionnaires. De plus, tel qu'expliqué au point précédent, dans les organismes voués à la production de concerts contemporains, les tâches commissariales sont effectuées, le plus souvent, par le directeur artistique et les musiciens. Après quelques années de pratique comme directrice artistique, j'en suis venue à travailler avec la notion de « scénario de concert ». Le parallèle avec le théâtre vient tout d'abord de l'expérience de travail que j'ai acquise avec divers metteurs en scène (Alice Ronfard, Véronika Makdissi-Warren et Hanna Abd El Nour). Ce parallèle a cependant aussi été fait par plusieurs théoriciens, notamment Henri Gouhier, qui considère le théâtre comme :

[...] un miroir grossissant à travers lequel on peut regarder un art à deux temps en état de marche, avec les questions qu'il provoque : la double existence de l'œuvre, les modèles qu'il propose, les possibilités offertes par les rapports de dépendance et d'indépendance entre ce qui se passe au premier temps et ce qui se passe au second. C'est son histoire qui fait du théâtre un point de vue privilégié sur les arts où la création de l'œuvre est, par son essence même, attente de re-crédation (Gouhier, 1989, p. 9).

La notion de « scénario de concert » suppose une activité de nature conceptuelle qui ne touche pas aux œuvres en tant que telles, mais plutôt à la façon dont elles sont présentées et agencées au cours du rituel concertant. Cette notion est issue du domaine théâtral et l'interprète qui endosse ce rôle est préoccupé par la question de la présence scénique du musicien, par la façon dont il habite la scène, ainsi que par des questions esthétiques, thématiques et formelles, auxquelles il tente de répondre dans une recherche d'unité au sein du concert. Cela ne touche pas exclusivement la musique de création. Une telle activité peut également être menée dans le cadre de l'interprétation des musiques du passé. Cependant, l'investissement de ce rôle par l'interprète me semble d'autant plus important dans le domaine de la musique de création, ou des musiques contemporaines, car il apporte des solutions à la problématique du rituel du concert contemporain.



Ce travail conceptuel s'apparente, d'une certaine manière, à du travail compositionnel. Dans le domaine musical, on a tendance à considérer comme des synonymes les termes « composition », « création » et « conception », mais il me semble important de les distinguer. Si le compositeur compose de la musique, le commissaire-musicien compose quant à lui des « scénarios de concerts ». En d'autres termes, son activité ne se limite pas qu'à choisir et à agencer

des œuvres. Sur le plan musical, la notion de « scénario de concert » implique qu'un réel travail de structure et de conception artistique est effectué sur le déroulement du concert. La notion de « scénario de concert » concerne aussi l'aspect visuel. Si la musique de concert est d'abord entendue, elle est aussi vue, du moins, dans le cas de la très grande majorité des œuvres instrumentales et vocales. Cette posture peut impliquer l'intégration d'éléments scéniques ou visuels au déroulement du concert. Mais il s'agit surtout de susciter chez l'interprète une conscience du fait qu'il est vu lorsqu'il est sur la scène et de développer chez lui une présence scénique qui sert le propos musical. Le scénario de concert peut donc concerner :

- L'accueil et l'accompagnement du public dans le lieu ;
- La création d'une trame entre des œuvres musicales disparates ;
- La mise en scène, ou du moins, en espace, des interprètes ;
- Le travail sur la présence scénique des musiciens ;
- Le contact des musiciens avec le public ;
- La participation des auditeurs à la trame du concert.

Conclusion

En guise de conclusion, il me semble pertinent de présenter un événement tiré de la programmation d'E27. Entre 2008 et 2012, l'organisme a donné la majeure partie de ses concerts au Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, en lien avec des expositions. L'événement *Aurores boréales* a été présenté autour de la collection d'art inuit Brousseau, le 21 janvier 2012. Pour ce programme, les œuvres choisies étaient thématiquement reliées à diverses facettes de cette exposition permanente. Tout d'abord, une improvisation sur *Anerca I*, de Milton Barnes par le contrebassiste Étienne Lafrance ouvrait le concert. Le mot « anerca » signifie, en inuit, « âme ». Ensuite, *Fertility Rites* de Christos Hatzis, une pièce pour marimba et musique sur support, utilisait des enregistrements de chant de gorge. Le quatuor à cordes *Cercle du nord I* de Derek Charke était ensuite présenté. Cette pièce comprend une technique de jeu utilisant des épingles à linge qui évoque également le chant de gorge. Ensuite, le programme comportait *Icicle*, une courte pièce pour flûte seule de Roberg Aitken, qui explore l'univers timbral du froid et la cristallinité de la glace, de même que la création de *Anirniit*, une œuvre de Ariane Nantel, alors étudiante à la Faculté de musique de l'Université Laval. *Vox Balaenae* de George Crumb, titre que l'on peut traduire littéralement par l'expression « le chant des baleines », clôturait le

programme en rappelant l'un des principaux matériaux utilisés dans l'art inuit, soit les os de baleine.

Le concert était présenté, pour des raisons techniques dans le hall du musée, en formule-cabaret. Selon mon expérience, cette formule, qui constitue un mode de présentation plus décontracté que le concert classique, dynamise le rituel concertant en stimulant le dialogue entre les musiciens et les auditeurs. En effet, dans ce type de concerts, il n'est pas rare que les auditeurs aillent spontanément discuter avec les artistes pendant l'entracte ou après le concert. En outre, la configuration des lieux faisait en sorte que la délimitation scène-salle était plus floue, ce qui instaurait une relation moins hiérarchisée entre les musiciens et les auditeurs. Il s'agissait en outre d'un concert commenté, c'est à dire que les musiciens expliquaient brièvement les œuvres aux auditeurs avant de les jouer. Ce type d'explication venaient compléter les notes de



programme. Ces dernières donnaient de l'information factuelle sur les œuvres présentées tandis que les commentaires des musiciens leur permettaient de partager leurs visions des œuvres jouées. Enfin, avant le concert, les auditeurs étaient invités à visiter l'exposition d'art inuit, au son de *Titakti*,⁶ une fresque électroacoustique du compositeur Philippe Legoff composée avec des sons enregistrés par l'artiste dans l'Arctique canadien. Les œuvres de l'exposition et les œuvres musicales se trouvaient à être ainsi mutuellement contextualisées au cours de cet événement.

Remerciements

Je tiens à remercier Dominique Potvin, responsable de l'action culturelle au Musée national des beaux-arts du

Québec, pour son ouverture et sa générosité dans le cadre des nombreux événements que E27 a présenté en collaboration avec le MNBAQ, entre 2008 et 2012. Autant d'occasions stimulantes de repenser le rituel du concert dans un lieu unique et inspirant !

¹ Il s'agit d'un organisme établi à Québec et présentant la majorité de ses activités dans cette région.

² Notamment les définitions données par Jessica Morgan dans son article « What is a curator ? », qui considère le rôle du commissaire comme étant intimement lié à la notion d'éducation (Morgan, 2013, p. 23), et Maria Lind, qui insiste sur sa fonction médiatrice (Lind, 2013).

³ Tels la Neuvième Symphonie de Beethoven, lors de l'inauguration de la Maison symphonique, le 7 septembre 2011.

⁴ Notamment les programmes *Vertiges* (présenté les 21 avril, à Lennoxville, au Théâtre Centennial, et 1^{er} mai 2013, à Montréal, à la Salle Pierre-Mercure), *L'Amour Sorcier* (présenté le 19 septembre 2012, à la Salle Pierre-Mercure), et *Les Cinq As* (présenté le 4 mai 2011, à la Salle Pierre-Mercure), pour n'en nommer que quelques-uns.

⁵ Cette notion est tirée de ma thèse doctorale en musicologie (Breault, 2013).

⁶ L'œuvre Titakti est disponible sur disque compact chez l'étiquette Empreintes Digitales (2014).

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Biographie

Marie-Hélène Breault détient deux doctorats de l'Université de Montréal, en interprétation musicale (2005) et en musicologie (2013). Entre 2008 et 2013, elle a été directrice artistique de l'organisme de production de concerts Erreur de type 27 (E27). Elle est présentement chercheure postdoctorale à Matralab (Université Concordia/FQRSC), où elle réalise, sous la supervision de Sandeep Bhagwati, divers projets de recherche-crédation en collaboration avec des créateurs issus des milieux de la musique, de la danse et de la littérature.

11. Curating Performances in Public Spaces:
The Sensorium presents *Hunter, Gatherer, Purveyor*
Natalie Doonan

Abstract: In *Hunter, Gatherer, Purveyor*, artists Eric Moschopedis and Mia Rushton lead a group of thirty to forty participants on a tour, pushing a mobile popsicle cart alongside Montréal's Lachine Canal, gathering local greens with participants. They create a map/field guide for the neighbourhood of St-Henri, depicting the locations of wild plants, their nutritional and medicinal properties and recipes for use. They distribute these amongst participants and stop at the identified locations to discuss what they have learned about the neighbourhood through its vegetation. Throughout the tour, people munch on various plants, including black elderberry and conifer cones. This performance is presented by the Sensorium, a collaborative performance art project based in Montréal. The Sensorium uses artist-led tours and tastings to engage conversation about current food issues. In these performances, food is used in provocative ways to elicit visceral reactions and incite participation.

Waste is: excess
isn't: recuperated
in: an intentional system



Waste is just a word we tell ourselves —
but why?



Scraps are feasts

Shit is compost

Fungi eat the deceased



Live green matter in St-Henri can be any of these:
a garden, a graveyard, a lawn, a park, an undeveloped property, a fallow space,
a waste.

These are all words. And here are more:
“likes” and “friends” and “followers” — but what measure are these
in a fallow space, a waste?
Intentionality is logocentric, Bruno believes.
And agency is distributive.
Plants have it too!
Why, suddenly even the pavement starts to breathe!



Eric explains that junipers are used to beautify and
also to keep unwanted others out.
A territorial marker, of sorts:
Junipers are pretty protections
While pear trees feed the flesh.



and Mia does that too
sharing edible art
in the form of terroir treats from Minitik 8ten entag8giban—
“the island where there was a village”—
Remix culture wrapped in frozen sheaths.



Would that which we call chicory smell as sweet if called a weed?

Every part edible, this modest green

will soon retire from St-Henri

to make way for an other creativity.



The English did that too, when they arrived.

Surveyed. measured. judged.

Deemed land unfenced, unfarmed

to be “uncivilized” and “wild”

waste space, ripe for the taking.



Without waste, this place is vital
Not “derelict” or “depressed” but
familiar, informal.

Teeming with contagious vibrancy.

<http://www.lesensorium.com/2011/09/hunter-gatherer-purveyor.html>

See also:

Doonan, Natalie (2015, spring, publication forthcoming). Techniques of Making Public: the Sensorium Through Eating and Walking. *Theatre Research in Canada*, 36(1).

Thanks to: Eric Moschopedis and Mia Rushton, la Ruche d’Art St-Henri, Natalie Fletcher for her “Philosophical Inquiry”, Alberta Foundation for the Arts, and Concordia University’s: Centre for Sensory Studies, Special Individualized Program, Sustainability Action Fund, Student Union, Small Grants Program, Council on Student Life.

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All photographs by Natalie Doonan.

Biography

Natalie Doonan is a multimedia and performance artist, writer and educator. She is founder of the Sensorium, a collaborative performance art project that features artist-led tours and tastings. Natalie's work has been shown in the Cultural Olympiad for the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, the LIVE Performance Art Biennale, the PuSh International Performing Arts Festival, Montréal's Elektra Festival and BIAN, Nuit Blanche and Art Souterrain. For more information on her work, visit www.lesensorium.com

12. *Food=Need: Constraints, Reflexivity and Community Performance*

Pam Patterson, OCAD University & *WIAprojects*, CWSE, OISE University of Toronto

Abstract: Performance, curated as a time-constrained inter-media strategy in/for community practice, offers a site for joint doing and interpreting. While objects can stand apart from their makers, performances cannot. Integral to community performance curation, is the necessity for community building – an emphasis on relationships, social structuring and culture. In the doing, the boundary between performer and audience becomes blurred and each participant is implicated in exploring the possibilities for reflexivity. Adding a time constraint to this activity both restricts and enables the project, building in both a sense of urgency and of consequence.

Food=Need was a collaborative community performance enacted between *WIAprojects* (Centre for Women’s Studies in Education, OISE/UT) and the Davenport Perth Neighbourhood Community and Health Centre. Various “food” narratives were performed: a formal workshop at a university, an evening gathering in a home kitchen, a day of bread baking in the community centre kitchen, a day dancing with tea towels with Spanish seniors, and an afternoon communing with chickens at the farmers market. The 3-day event culminated in a community potluck and performance evening where these various activities reformed in performance and celebration. Each event acted as a map or metaphor for food and our complex relationship to it – reflecting our needs, wants, anxieties and pleasures. Group reflection happened during and following each event; curatorial debriefing daily.

Compressed into three days, *Food=Need*’s time constraint both restricted and enabled. In complexity theory, constraints of difference enable participants to engage in structured conditions that help determine the balance between sources of coherence that allow for a focus of purpose/identity and sources of disruption and randomness that compel them to constantly adjust and adapt (Davis & Sumara, 2008). Artists, curators and community members used this “time” to work through problems, tension and even fatigue. Using reflexivity as a critical tool, we improvised, amplified experiences, and altered the environment. This created a place of difference that interrupted patterned or habitual ways of knowing and created new potentials for exchange.

I have twenty minutes–maximum. Twenty minutes in which as “curator” to re-perform a concept, a practice and an event. Twenty minutes in which to feed you, nourish and sustain you, and meet your needs as researchers, curators, and community animators.

In speaking to my practice as performance curator within this conference context, I invite you to engage in action and reflection with me here today in relation to a project I initiated in spring 2012 entitled *Food=Need*. This project has spiralled through repeating markers that include: ideation, research, staging, and reflection over the last two years to its most recent staging in March 2014.

Let's begin: please clap and pause with me

It would seem that this action might provide an opportunity for us to connect in play and to explore a common action or language. But of course, certain differences are invisible. For example, I have a debilitating rheumatic disease that makes clapping painful for me. Some of you may be hearing or sight impaired. Some of you may resent or feel uncomfortable with group activities. So in challenging certain assumptions about community building and the collegiately of community work, actions such as these might in fact mask the complexity of, and potentially interesting challenges posed by our differences. If I was to feed you well even that might be problematic: some of you might require diets which are kosher, vegan, or gluten-free. Some of you may love the celebratory aspects of food sharing while some of you may have a great deal of anxiety around food. And would we have all of this resolved in twenty minutes?

An influential arts educator and activist, Dian Marino wrote:

I advocate difference but I also advocate connectedness. To me being different in a creative way means that I'm willing to connect my difference to other people's differences. That can be a paradoxical connection—that people would want to be clear about their different positions, where their differences are located, and then also wish to figure things out collaboratively, collectively. Frequently when we encounter difference, we don't explore it; we try to manage it. Perhaps we can search for common threads while we appreciate our differences. (Marino, in Clarke & Cristall, 1997, p. 45)

I view performance curation through the lens of education. I suppose this was to be inevitable as I grew up surrounded by educators—my mother taught choral music in schools, my aunt was a singing teacher, my grandfather, a trumpeter, choral conductor and the Director of Music for the city of Toronto schools. Performance for them was intertwined with learning: learning about self, learning through an art form, and always examining how to perform learning and learn performance.

At this point in my life, as I juggle my own multiple roles as performer, curator, and educator, I search, not always successfully, to be flexible, to achieve a rough balance between my needs as curator, the needs of my co-curators, the needs of the artists with which I work, and the needs of the communities which I serve. In other words, this is the mess I have to work with.

I stumble; I get impatient, and at times resist the complexities. I try to manage it. And then in the end, given the time available and the need to get the event up and running, I let go.

Performance, as community activity, offers opportunities for collective doing and interpreting. Performance, as a curated but unpredictable event, challenges both our risk-taking skills and our desire for, and faith in, collective stability. Performance, as a series of multiple activities and events enables us to reflect and say; okay we tried this out... now, what happened?

While objects can stand apart from their makers, performances as collectively curated and realized cannot always do so. In the doing, the boundaries between performers, curators, and audience can become blurred and each participant can share in exploring the delights, differences, and disasters. Community-shared performance events then can become trans-personal learning opportunities for collective reflection.

Collective reflection can happen daily during the event and after the event. Building momentum, these reflections can facilitate spiralling the event on into new iterations with different performers and communities with each new event honoring collective learning and potentially destabilizing curatorial proscriptions.

What seems to be promoted as integral to community performance curation, is the necessity for community building—an emphasis on relationships, social structuring and cultural animation. But we can wallow in this process and get mired in issues. Planning and mounting a performance event adds a time constraint that both limits and charges us. Having to work to a launch date can build in a sense of urgency and of consequence. We need to get on with it, perform in response to the moment, and be responsive to each other and responsible to the project. We need to trust in our commitment to a productive use of time.

Food=Need was a collaborative community performance enacted between *WIAprojects* (Centre for Women's Studies in Education, OISE/UT) and the Davenport Perth Neighbourhood Community and Health Centre (DPNCHC). Various “food” narratives were performed: a formal workshop at a university, an evening gathering in a home kitchen, a day of bread baking in the

community centre kitchen, a day dancing with tea towels with Spanish seniors, and an afternoon communing with a chicken at the farmers market. The three-day event culminated in a community potluck and performance evening where these various activities re-formed in



performance and celebration. Each event acted as a map or metaphor for food and our complex relationship to it—reflecting our needs, wants, anxieties, and pleasures. Group reflection happened during and following the daily events as did curatorial debriefing.

Image 1: *Food=Need* DPNCHC poster. Photographer: James Looker. Performer: Chrissie Poitras. Poster design: Lydia Charak.

Compressed into three days, *Food=Need*'s time constraints both restricted and enabled. In complexity theory, note Davis and Sumara (2008), constraints enable participants to engage in structured conditions that help determine the balance between sources of coherence that allow for a focus of purpose/identity, and sources of disruption and randomness that compel participants to constantly adjust and adapt. Time, as a limiting factor, enabled artists, curators and community members to quickly work through problems, tensions, and even fatigue. Adding reflexivity as a critical tool, we improvised, amplified experiences, and altered the environment and our expectations. This created a strategy which interrupted patterned or habitual ways of knowing and created new potentials for exchange.

Food=Need was collectively curated by a three-person team: Trisha Lamie, Leena Raudvee and myself. Both Trisha and I work full-time as teachers and academics. Leena is an artist. I took the lead as program/project director, chose the artists (in consultation with the

others), wrote the grants, established a rapport, and negotiated a working collaboration with the DPNCHC community. Over the year preceding the November event various conversations emerged among the curators, with the artists, and with our various community contacts—such as Arts4All at the DPNCHC and the Dufferin Grove Park Community group. We became a loosely formed social collective, more delicately nuanced in our observations of process and of each other as we focused on the project at hand. We made decisions on space use as we discussed food anxiety. One artist totally changed the focus of her performance from sharing warm baked potatoes at STOP 103’s community bake oven behind the DPNCHC to addressing personal issues of food and death. She wanted a change of venue. We talked. We worked it out.



Image 2: *Food=Need* DPNCHC Margaret Dragu, bread making in a community kitchen. Photo: Leena Raudvee

Situations such as these were but one part of the emerging *Food=Need* interactions and conversations and they compelled collective participation. The various contexts, the people, the thematic defined the conditions of this project's emergence.

This activity spoke to complexity, diversity and pragmatics: the adoption of an attitude whereby we, as complex collective, could pursue different agendas, be informed of each other's perspectives, and be motivated to find ways to be able to work together. We needed to be cautious, humble and caring—not always easy to do when under pressure, exhausted, or in the heat of the moment—and to understand knowledge as potentially dynamic and volatile. Trusting in this collective commitment to knowing, we activated these reflective moments as “potentials” in the hope that they might trigger other, and hence more sophisticated, possibilities.

Following on that first event, I facilitated a second iteration with a larger curatorial grouping within OCAD University. This curatorial collective included students, staff, faculty from design and art, community activists, and *WIAprojects*' interns. We screened *Food=Need*, a film made by Diana Piruevska from footage she took of performances and conversations from the DPNCHC event, engaged in discussion with a panel composed of education, community, and food activists, mounted an exhibition, and held a food party and workshop.

Although an example of this film is not publicly available online, I would like to share here a short DIY video by one of the *Food=Need* performance artists Margaret Dragu. This, I think, provides some interesting insights into the diverse perceptions and practices of the participating performance artists and how they spoke of their engagement with community and with this project. In *Bread Stories TO*, Margaret Dragu (2013) overlays images from the Toronto performances over projected images of her Lock Sloy kitchen in BC shown as her closing night DPNCHC installation.

Davis and Samara (2008) note that diversity cannot be assigned or legislated; it must be assumed to be present. Similarly, it is unlikely that diversity, even if expressed, will be recognized and valued if the task set for the collective is trivial. Internal diversity is outward oriented, in that it enables novel actions and possibilities in response to contextual dynamics. But

we must also attend to the common ground of participants and assume that stability too will be present. Diversity, commonality, interactions, and decentralized control.... we can't control the structure and outcomes of the collective. It cannot be managed.

That which unites us is our shared ideas, insights, projects, concepts and understandings. These constitute the groups' emerging body of knowledge. This knowledge is active and participatory, and understood as informing future opportunities for expression and engagement and for creating and sharing creations.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the Art Curators Association of Québec for inviting me to participate in this symposium and the many artists and facilitators who participated in both iterations of *Food = Need* and generously provided me with images, feedback, and inspiration.

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Biography

Pam Patterson's research focuses on community and disability arts and education. She is Director, *WIAprojects*, Centre for Women's Studies in Education, OISE/UT and teaches at OCAD University and the University of Western Ontario. As a performance artist, she has performed internationally, solo and with Leena Raudvee in ARTIFACTS.

13. Curating Audiovisual Performances in London, UK

Oli Sorenson, Concordia, Interdisciplinary Humanities Doctoral Program

Abstract: I will start this paper, entitled Curating Audiovisual Performance Events in London, with a quick summary of contents. In a first instance I will provide some initial definitions of key concepts I address, then provide brief accounts of my own work as an artist, as well as curator in London, UK. I will summarize what this experience has provided for me as a curator, for the artists I invited and the audiences attending these events. I will also outline specific works and artists that expand the concepts of Audiovisual (AV) performance out of a strictly defined discipline, so AV culture may be used here more as a theme than a discipline. To finish, I will attempt to suggest how these experiences may help in shaping the art scenes of Montreal, for the benefit of AV performers, curators and other such workers in this field.

Preliminary Definitions

Not everybody will have the same idea of what I mean by “Audiovisual Performance” so I’ll just say that, for me, this term stems from a fusion between DJing and VJing, which the latter are nowadays more associated with club culture, and festive environments than other forms of artistic expressions. Audiovisual Performance is often used as a way for such practitioners that have a base in DJing and VJing to be taken more seriously. Many times, I heard such artists say “I’m not a DJ or I’m not a VJ, I’m an Audiovisual Performer, or to shorten: I’m an AV Performer”. Some of the better-known AV artists include DJ Spooky¹, Ryoichi Kurokawa² or Anti VJ³, so this term does encompass a pretty wide range of practices. But in essence, the range of tools that AV performers use differs in degree, but not so much in kind with DJing and VJing. For example all of the above creatives will use mobile computing devices—such as laptops and tablets, as well as audio mixers, video mixers and so on—to deliver a media centric sequence of sounds and moving images, enacted by live operators. And the same can be said about the similarities in narrative content, which I will go into in a minute.

But another point I want to make before, regarding this type of practice, is that it is intimately tied with that of curating, since although many performers do create original material, the essence of DJing and VJing and indeed AV performance does involve a large part of collecting and re-arranging existing work, produced by other creators, and to sequence this content in a format that will be palatable to new audiences, or add a new perspective to content that would not otherwise seem appropriate for public viewing. As an obvious example to clarify

this point, I return to DJ Spooky, with his re-mixing (DJ Spooky, 2007) of the film *Birth of a Nation* (Griffith, 1915), making a powerful statement in re-appropriating the controversial portrayal of African Americans vs the Ku Klux Klan, set in the Civil War period of America. For obvious reasons, it is difficult to imagine the 1915, NAACP banned film, to imagine this film publicly screened in another context than as a remix by an African American AV performer.

A Personal Perspective

I want to move on to my own situation, when I relocated to London in 1999, 15 years ago, where I fairly quickly entered the world of DJs and VJs, at a time when Audiovisual performance was not yet a commonly used term. According to most of my peers, London was and still is today the city inhabited the largest number of AV artists, We can think of *Addictive TV*, *The Light Surgeons*, *UVA*, *Hexstatic* and many more in this line up, but at the time when I moved to London in 1999, there were very few places to go where such performances were highlighted as the main attraction. On the one hand there were many clubs, that had a VJ on one side and a DJ on another, but the connection between the two were at worst, random and at best happy coincidences. On the other hand you had graphic design festivals such as *Onedotzero*⁴, which did host very interesting AV performances, but these only happened once a year. So events like these were few and far between.

One might say that I stepped in as an AV Performance curator to fill this gap in London, to organise events that would feature AV content, not simply as a sideshow to film festivals such as in the case of *Onedotzero*, or second fiddle to DJ headliners, in the case of club nights. Also one of my main interests was to stage these events on a regular basis, so these would become regular cultural calendar dates that audiences could take a habit in going to, but also as a meeting point for AV practitioners to network and exchange ideas. I started my first event on a weekday, which was called *VJ Culture* at AKA, a side venue of The End club, in downtown London. *VJ Culture* was also held at Cargo in East London. I then moved on with *VJ Cult*, a screening program at the Cinema of the Institute of Contemporary Arts, in the West End. Both *VJ Culture* and *VJ Cult* were pretty successful, but these fell a bit outside of the strict definition of AV performance since the first mostly featured VJ/DJ collaborations and the second programmed mainly non-live screenings of AV content. However, these event did fill the

purpose of providing a regular meeting place of AV enthusiasts and practitioners, for them to network and exchange ideas, while attending a program of works which they were particularly sensitive to. In addition this first series of events provided me with opportunities to take on the next lot of things to come.

A Mature AV Scene

After an extended break in curating to nurture my own career as a performer, in 2005 I returned to such endeavours with *The AV Social*, a series of mobile events which I staged in many different venue, in and out of London, to different cities in the UK as well as continental Europe. The most successful of these events was the one hosted by Tate Britain in 2007, as part of their *Late at Tate* program⁵, This led me to meet Stuart Brown, head of programming at the British Film Institute (BFI), who after many conversations accepted my proposal to centre my curating activities onto a single venue, at the reception lobby of the BFI on a bi-monthly basis, which started in 2008. This was called *Dark Fibre*⁶, a term designating a common practice when various private and government firms installed fibre optic telecommunications systems, instead of digging a hole to set a single strand of fibre optics in the ground, knowing how fast technology evolved and anticipating the need for more bandwidth in the not too distant future, most firms simply added more fibres in the ground, in the first instance of digging, so to avoid digging again later, when such a need did arrive. And so as this fibre optics technology uses light to transmit information, the unused fibres were in fact dark. Hence the term: *Dark Fibre*. Both Stuart and I agreed this was an great title for an event that would not only cater for AV performances in their current form, but also to yet unknown modes of expressions that made use of non-traditional tools as much as cutting edge technology, in the delivery of live and not so live events.

Taking this experience to Montreal

This was how my life as a performer and curator evolved in London for more than a decade. However family matters forced me to return to Montreal at the end of 2010. While in Montreal I thought I might as well make the most of it and continue my various projects here, and although as an artist things have developed fairly well, I found the curatorial part of my work more difficult to sustain, especially within institutions such as the Musée d'Art Contemporain

(MAC), even though I had accumulated an important amount of experience that facilitated my access to many such venues worldwide.

Part of the problem seems that most of the Nocturnal exhibitions and Late events programmed at the MAC⁷ and similar venues are internally curated, and very few are done by invited curators, which I claim contributes to a less dynamic scene, as far as my interests in AV performance are concerned. In terms of openness to as of yet un-known or unexplored creative fields, like I have done within the mandate of *Dark Fibre*, I remain un-convinced of the ways in which similar institutions are curated in Montreal, perhaps this has also something to do with the way the funding system is compartmented, which seems still very discipline-based, and not thematically structured. I'm afraid I don't hold all the answers to the issues I'm raising, and I do invite people to share their thoughts and make the question period into a rich conversation on how the AV performance scene in Montreal and beyond is doing, how to continue to transform it, to adapt to transformations we cannot anticipate but still nurture these unexpected transformations, and what you think the role of the curator in these fields should be.

¹ See <http://djspooky.com> for more information on this artist.

² See <http://www.ryoichikurokawa.com> for more information on this artist.

³ See <http://www.antivj.com> for more information on this artist.

⁴ You can learn more about this festival at <http://onedotzero.com>.

⁵ Learn more about this program at <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/eventseries/late-tate-britain>.

⁶ See <http://www.bfi.org.uk/live/video/69> or <https://vimeo.com/17127134> for more information on *Dark Fibre*.

⁷ For more information on the Nocturnes at the Musée d'art contemporain, see <http://www.macm.org/en/activities-and-events/friday-nocturnes/>

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Biography

Born in Los Angeles, Oli Sorenson has lived and worked in London (UK) between 1999 and 2010, to combine artistic activities with curatorial work. He is now based in Montreal, Canada since 2010.

14. Rehearsing Collectivity: Choreography Beyond Dance

Elena Basteri, Emanuele Guidi, Elisa Ricci

(GbR Berlin – Gesellschaft bürgerlichen Rechts / LA SOCIETÀ SEMPLICE)

Rehearsing Collectivity - Choreography beyond Dance was an interdisciplinary project that took place in 2011 over 10 days at the Tanzfabrik/Uferstudios in Berlin. The format of the project included a visual art exhibition, a series of lectures, a workshop, performances and a publication. We understand this lecture as a continuation of the project itself: our goal is to re-assemble and re-stage our ‘past’ project in front of and with the participation of a (new) audience, re-gathering a set of key words which were of importance for the project¹.

CHOROEGRAPHY (SCORE I)

**As a sign of solidarity with recent world events,
for the next minute do not interrupt the activity
you are doing at this moment²**

COLLECTIVITY I

“Collectivity is something that takes place as we arbitrarily gather to take part in different forms of cultural activity such as looking at art. If we countenance that beyond all the roles that are allotted to us in culture --roles such as those of being viewers, listeners or audience members in one capacity or another -- there are other emergent possibilities for the exchange of shared perspectives or insights or subjectivities -- we allow for some form of emergent collectivity. To speak of collectivities is to de-nativise community, to argue it away from the numerous essential roots of place and race and kinship structures that have for so long been the glue that has held it together”³.

CIRCUMSTANCE
Kitchen Choreography ⁴



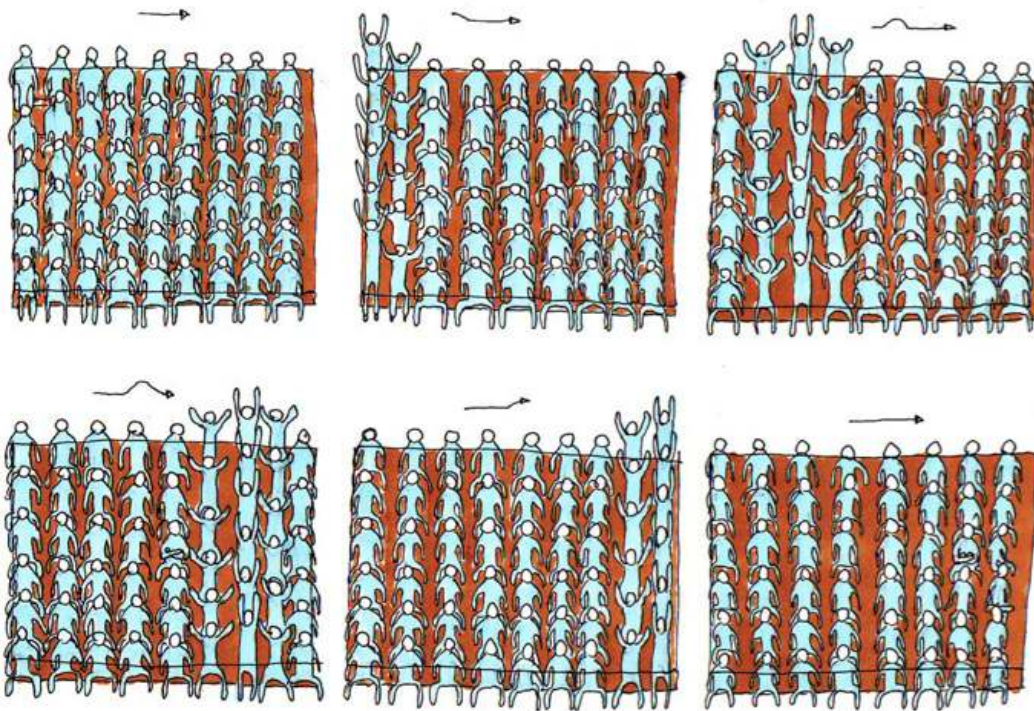
MOVEMENT I

“Political lexicon is surprisingly indebted to the terminology of physical movement. Words such as ‘revolution’, ‘uprising’, ‘strike’ all originate from descriptions of physical displacements, used to describe a social body in the act of pursuing a collective goal or in the position of having obtained it.

Even a general term such as ‘movement’ shows this ambiguity — paradoxically, if the term is used literally, it refers to an abstraction, as physical movement is not something physical that exists in space, but a perceptual construction in time. On the other hand, if it is employed figuratively, it denotes something concrete, a specified set of people struggling to reach their goals.”⁵

CHOROEGRAPHY (SCORE II)

A Disturbance that travels Through Space and Time⁶



Generate human waves in the venue you are entering

Tribune⁷



CHOROEGRAPHY (SCORE III)

“We can call it *Ola* (the Spanish word for wave, as in the action performed by spectators at a football game), the auto matic behavior of the crowd. We can call it a swarm: a plurality of living beings whose behavior follows (or seems to follow) rules embedded in their neural system. Biologists call a swarm a multitude of animals of similar size and body orientation, moving together in the same direction, performing actions in a coordinated way. In conditions of social hyper-complexity, human beings tend to act as a swarm. When the infosphere is too dense and too fast for a conscious processing of the information, people tend to conform to shared behavior”⁸.

COLLECTIVITY II *Pensiero Unico*⁹

On March 22nd 2003 in the Saletta Comunale for Contemporary Art in Castel San Pietro (Bologna), starting at 6 pm, the artist Cesare Pietroiusti repeatedly and continuously sung the first few words of the two Italian fascist songs:

Giovinezza ("Youth, youth, spring of beauty") and *Vincere* ("To win, to win, to win, and we will win, in the sky, on land and on sea. It's our word of honour, our supreme will.").

The artist intention was to stop only when he had completely lost his voice.



“In the book *Language and Death*, Giorgio Agamben says the voice is the link between meaning and the body, meaning and the flesh. Voice is the bodily expression of meaning, and also the bodily manifestation of the self.

Ritournelle is a sound, a sign, a voice, a song that makes it possible to link our existence with the existence of other human beings, and it is also the song of solidarity that is making rebellion and autonomy from the unified rhythm of capitalist productivity possible.¹⁰”



The action ended at 11.45 pm. before Pietroiusti reached his goal of loosing his voice. The artist stopped the action after a group of fascist youngsters unexpectedly joined him in singing.

MOVEMENT II

“Sometimes people start to sing the same song, and to dance the same dance. It can be dangerous; fascism is based on this kind of homogeneous subjectivation, and modern totalitarianism in general. But it can also happen in ironic and nomadic ways. People start to create a new song, and they do it together.

That’s a movement.

What is a movement?

It is an event opening up a new landscape. When a movement happens (in the field of art, in the field of social politics), this is the effect. Thanks to the movement (literally, a displacement), you are able to see things that you did not see before. A new rhythm makes it possible to see a new landscape. And when you see the landscape, you discover new ways.”¹¹

SOCIAL CHOREOGRAPHY

“I would define the concept of social choreography as something that creates a connection between the social and the aesthetic by attributing to the aesthetic a fundamental role in the description of the political and the social. Choreography is here understood as a performative structuring of body practices, as an analytical category that allows reflection on social order, as well as a concept that permits exposure of the relationship between the aesthetic and the political in all social fields”¹²

CHOREOGRAPHY (SCORE III) Audience Survey¹³

Have you ever found it hard to get along with other people?

Have you ever lived alone?

Do you live alone now?

Would you agree that work is the most fulfilling part of your life?

Have you ever taken a train without paying?

Have you ever taken an illegal substance?

Have you ever vandalized public property?

Have you ever lied to the police?

Have you ever cheated on your income tax?

Have you ever played the stock market?

Do you see your friends as often as you'd like to?

Do you generally consider yourself to be a happy person?

Do you think that it is difficult to admit in public that you have been or are unhappy?

Do you think that unhappy people get ostracised socially?

Have you ever been to China?

Have you ever been a member of the communist party?

Have you ever read *Das Kapital*?

Have you ever read a magazine?

Have you ever had more than 10,000 euro in your bank account?

Do you understand how the global economy works?

Have you ever had a dream about your computer, or which involved your computer?

Would you trust Google more than the government?

Have you ever participated in a public protest?

Would you agree that it made a difference?

Would you agree that things will be better in the future?



Have you ever felt that participation in a collective has allowed you to fulfil your individual potential?¹⁴

Spectator 1

“Let’s imagine a group in which every person feels like they are fulfilling their individuality. I think that only works in a group where everyone needs this person as an individual and visa versa. Let’s imagine a perfect village where everyone is doing exactly the job that they feel fulfilled by; for example, I am baking and everyone needs my baking. It only works when there is a delivery and a need for what I deliver.”

Spectator 2

“Maybe you are baking for five years and suddenly do not feel fulfilled anymore. The group members have to be open enough and accepting enough to say, “Ok, you should not bake anymore.””

Spectator 1

“What if I am totally fulfilled by baking, but I am a very lousy baker. Other people find my cakes unpleasant but I am having a good time.”

Spectator 2

“Within your idea of the village structure where everyone has a role and a productive function, what about the non productive people? Is there room within that for taking care of a disable person, for example?”

Spectator 1

“I would feel unhappy in a group that does not need what I have to deliver, or if I am asked to deliver something that I am not good at.”

SWARM EFFECT

“The swarm is a form of collective action that arises out of networks in which the connections between participants are loose enough for the impression of a whole. For something like a swarm collective to emerge, it is sufficient that every individual communicates with a couple of his or her neighbours, as long as some of those neighbours in turn communicate with other neighbours, and so on. This means that we may engage in casual exchange with a limited number of others who we position as our neighbours (though, in the case of internet-based communication, they can be scattered across the globe), and from these communications can evolve, as an effect, a collective undertaking, whose form as an agent will have been that of a swarm.

The people who participate in this collective undertaking will have no representation of the collective as a whole — in fact, they may learn that such a collective exists only from reports in the mass media, which will only react and report when the dispersed activities have acquired a certain visibility in the public arena, in the form of gatherings, for instance.

It is for this reason that I emphasize that the social swarm is an effect: it has an effective reality, not an ontological or representational one”.¹⁵

COLLECTIVITY III (conclusions)

“Throughout the broad scope of the project, the definition of circumstance was increasingly stretched beyond those spatial and temporal coordinates that could have helped produce the conditions in which a clear definition of collectivity could emerge. Imagination, flexibility, risk and danger, as well as performative potential, are aspects concerning collectivity which were repeatedly stressed by the artists, as well as by the lecturers. This could indicate a possible direction for the rethinking of collectivities as dynamic, constantly changing, and self-redefining entities.

According to the latest news from around the world, we could even describe collectivity as ‘*a disturbance that travels through space and time*’, a definition that would fit for choreography too, and hence confirm anew the relation between the two fields with all the implications concerned. A conflictual, dynamic, ever-becoming idea of collectivity seems to be the point made by *Rehearsing Collectivity*, where rehearsal is still central, and almost the only possible mode of acting collectively. It is therefore vital to keep the imaginative effort alive, an active dimension of desire, where imagination is not seen as opposite to reason, or reality, but rather as a nomadic tool, used to travel back and forth on a line of tension between the self and the common, the present and the past, art and society”.¹⁶

¹ All the following text quotes, except those by Irit Rogoff and Gabriele Klein, are from the book: *Rehearsing Collectivity – Choreography beyond Dance*, ed. by Elena Basteri, Emanuele Guidi, Elisa Ricci, Argobooks, Berlin, 2012. All the works have been shown during the project *Rehearsing Collectivity – Choreography beyond Dance*, at Tanzfabrik Berlin, between 27 April and 6 May 2011.

² Roman Ondák, Announcement, 2002, sound installation. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Martin Janda, Vienna, GB agency, Paris, Johnen Galerie, Berlin

³ Irit Rogoff, We - Collectivities, Mutualities, Participations, 2004, in theater.kein.org/node/95

⁴ Libia Castro and Ólafur Ólafsson, Kitchen Choreography, 2005, Video. Courtesy of the artists. Stills.

⁵ Vincenzo Latronico, A Bijection Can Also Be Referred To As An Equivalence, in *Rehearsing Collectivity — Choreography Beyond Dance*, 2012, p.55.

⁶ Aldo Giannotti, A Disturbance that travels Through Space and Time, 2011, Performance. Courtesy of the artist, commissioned by *Rehearsing Collectivity — Choreography Beyond Dance*. p.58 and 98.

⁷ Aldo Giannotti, Tribune, 2011, Installation. Courtesy of the artist, commissioned by *Rehearsing Collectivity — Choreography Beyond Dance*. Installation View, Photo: Roberto Beani, 2012.

⁸ Franco Berardi Bifo, Automation and Infinity of Language — Poetry versus Financial Semiocapital, 2012, p.31

⁹ Cesare Pietroiusti, Pensiero Unico, 2003, Video. Courtesy of the the artist. Stills.

¹⁰ Franco Berardi Bifo, Automation and Infinity of Language — Poetry versus Financial Semiocapital, 2012, p.33

¹¹ Franco Berardi Bifo, Automation and Infinity of Language — Poetry versus Financial Semiocapital, 2012, p.35

¹² Gabriele Klein, 2012: [http:// www.dance-politics.de/homedt.htm](http://www.dance-politics.de/homedt.htm). In rehearsing collectivity - choreography beyond dance, p. 90.

¹³ Olivia Plender, Audience Survey (Part I), 2011. Selection of questions from the script of the performance in which the audience members were asked to answer the survey' s questions by raising their hands. p.76

¹⁴ Olivia Plender, Audience Survey (Part II), 2011. Excerpt of the discussion with the audience. p. 76

¹⁵ Kai Van Eikels, From 'Archein' to 'Prattein': Suggestions for an Un-creative Collectivity, 2012, p. 21

¹⁶ Elena Basteri, Emanuele Guidi, Elisa Ricci: Afterword, 2012, p. 98

Courtesy and photo credits:

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Cesare Pietroiusti, Pensiero Unico, 2003, Video. Courtesy of the the artist. Stills.

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15. Pseudo-, Anti-, and Total Dance: on Curating an Experimental Dance Series

SALTA Collective

Abstract: We are a curatorial collective dancers who live in Oakland, California. We would like to share our experiences and reflections on curating a monthly series of experimental dance in Oakland. We created the series as an informal showing / party in which a number of different artists show work and the audience donates beverages, snacks, and goodies. Each month, SALTA inhabits a different space in the East Bay that has been donated for the evening, keeping the entire event free of monetary exchange. All members identify as dancers, and we are engaged in an inquiry of what it means to support dance and other dancers as artist-curators. We are committed to dance as a platform and frame, but we allow this commitment to evolve, to be nuanced, contradictory, and mobile. We are not only dancers, but also activists, teachers, scholars, artists, and we want to allow for this wholeness of identity in our curatorial practice.

Introduction

SALTA¹ is a collective of seven dancers based in Oakland, CA. Responding to the precariousness of being artists, we formed the collective in 2012 with a goal of starting our own space for rehearsal and performance. Since that time, our vision has expanded to include projects that make space for dance to happen more broadly. In this paper, we will provide a bit of context for our work and some questions that have come up for us, and we invite you to share your questions and how the project resonates with you.

For the past two years, we have curated a monthly performance series that takes place in a different venue each month, collaborating with a variety of organizations and individuals to expose new audiences to contemporary dance and performance. Admission is always a non-monetary donation to the free bar and boutique, where everyone eats, drinks, and shops for free. This alternative economy and context frees us to be radically inclusive, experimental, and eccentric in our curation. We invite a mix of established and emerging choreographers, bridging generations of Bay Area dance makers.

In addition to our monthly series, SALTA is engaged in collaboration with other dance makers and curators locally and nationally. We have co-curated an event with Brooklyn-based collective AUNTS, and we have begun to build a national network of venues and curators in support of experimental performers organizing their own tours. After two years of organizing and curating together, SALTA is currently in the process of obtaining a huge building in Oakland with a group of like-minded collectives including a free school, a printing press, a radical

bookstore and more. If successful, the project will provide SALTA with a platform and permanent home to host workshops and performances, and provide affordable rehearsal space to Bay Area dancers. Coming together with this collective of collectives is a natural movement forward for us as we invest our time and resources in expanding our collaborative process, nourishing ourselves as artists, and making space for dance to happen in Oakland.

Curation

SALTA events are curated to offer a different way of interfacing with performance. The structure of our events is loose and the aesthetic is DIY. Our primary focus is on curator as taking care of the artists we invite to work with us, and leaving room for audience to participate with the work in different ways. As artists in the field ourselves, we want to offer a platform that we ourselves would want to participate in. One way that we decided to start researching how to be curators was by adopting the “yes policy” to anyone who approached us interested in performing, volunteering, hosting, etc. We try when at all possible to say yes, and see what happens. Every month after a show we ask: “what did we learn?” As we get answers to our questions of which environments promote deep research, and engage a diverse community and wild experimentation, we immediately implement our discoveries.

We find it is satisfying to be in the same risk situation as the artist. For us, risk means consent to not being in total control of content. It means not putting constraints on artists’ work. It means a constant learning from doing. It means a constant research into new forms and proposals, which directly mirrors our personal artistic practices.



Photo 1: Dance by James Kidd. Photo by Chani Bockwinkel

Over the past two years we have employed various curatorial methods for our events. Some shows are closer to a party, while others are more formal presentations of work. We have experimented with chain curation in which we invite an artist who invites another artist who invites another. We have organized evenings around spatial constraints (such as dances performed only in the round) and thematic constraints (only task based dance). We have used guest curators to bring in artists we do not know. Two of our favorite formats we call *3/3/3* and *SALTA throws down*. *3/3/3* is three performers/groups that receive full support and attention from all 7 of us. At a *SALTA throws down* event, more than twenty performers show work in a large open warehouse or ballroom, with simultaneous and overlapping performances.

Although we are currently interested in these two curatorial models of *3/3/3* and *SALTA throws down*, we do not want to become locked in these forms. We curate in these alternative modes in order to allow people to try things that they wouldn't try at a more formal/traditional showing or proscenium stage setting. We will continue with our "yes policy" of expansion, of

going for broke, for never getting entirely comfortable with what we host. SALTA wishes to remember that movement can merge, form relationship, engage, but that it can also be radically alien, and challenging. We ask ourselves as curators and all involved in SALTA events to forget constantly justifying their/our dances, just dance.

Collectivity

SALTA approaches curation, making work, organizing events, and all of the administrative, social and technical projects that come with it as multipliciously as possible. The seven of us are invested in collaboration in a deep and essential way, but we allow for a fluid definition of what that means. We have no codified rubric for how to collectively run meetings, reach agreements, how to curate and run a show. We operate a constantly shifting terrain, modifying and honing based on what works for us and others and what doesn't, what might each new space call for and what conversations we can have with the people who run this space; how we can be in service of the art and in service of our own desires and the desires of those there to perform and there to watch.

SALTA's process has been described as a swirl, and colleagues have remarked that the fact that we have no system points to how well it's working. Douglas Dunn's description of The Grand Union's process gets at an essential aspect of our own: "Whoever speaks, speaks. Whoever dances, dances" (Dunn, in Kreemer, 2009, p. 56). We come together, identify what we're excited about, what needs to be done, and then we go do it. Working together is for us an attuning of this relational swirl to keep our hearts and minds deeply invested in the process, the outcome, and the surprises that come with it.

We find this to be a social, joyful model that also aligns with our politics: a commitment to 'commoning', pooling resources, creating space outside of institutions, and searching for alternate modes of working within and outside of hierarchy, patriarchy and capitalism. Through collaboration, we want to investigate the political possibilities of experimental, artist-run curatorial practices. We connect with Goat Island's description of their working process as "a decentering expansion" where "divisions between individuals and ideas of authorship are blurred" (Delgado & Syich, 2002, p. 241).

While we're aware of some of the strengths of a more informal, collective process, we're also sensitive to the ways that power can operate invisibly within any group. This informs our desire to remain self-reflexive and continue to evolve our working methods.



Photo 2: Dance by Laura Larry Arrington. Photo by Chani Bockwinkel

Historical Process in Bay Area Dance

We have been saying from the start of our project that our series is "a historical process." SALTA can be seen as one thread in a historical web. First, there is what came before us and fuel our ideas, and there are those individuals that support us as mentors. One way we have acknowledged these generational ties is by curating older, more established artists into our performance events, inviting them to share about the works that they have been creating in the Bay Area for longer than we've been alive.

Secondly, there are our considerations for the years to come. We take into consideration our anticipated growth and outreach. We are invested in the future of the dance world. Thirdly,

we situate ourselves within the current political and artistic climate of the East Bay Area and contemporary dance world at large. At the heart of this “historical process” is a reworking and redefining of what it means to be a dancer. With the traditional company model increasingly more difficult to maintain and sustain, we are holding a unique kind of space for the freelance dancer. As artist-curators / dancer-curators, part of our project as SALTA is figuring out what it means to dance (and to be a dancer) at this historical juncture in which dance artists are facing a scarcity of gigs, funds and community.

In our area, the Bay Area, this juncture is compounded by a “tech boom” that is rapidly shifting the economics of our environment. San Francisco has become too costly to live in. The service class, artists, queers are moving in droves to Oakland. We are daily faced with the realities of gentrification and the responsibility to integrate ourselves into an area largely composed of communities of color.

Space

Initially, we gathered around the dream of opening a space that would be affordable to rent, serious about offering free performances, and passionate about facilitating experiment and exploration by new and established artists alike. However, as we began to bike around, scribbling down numbers posted on the sides of buildings, we felt uneasy joining the growing numbers beginning to “invest” in Oakland’s supposedly empty space, propelling the project of gentrification forward. Realizing the complications of our space-procuring project, we decided to instead begin hosting a performance series in multiple places; this topic of space and place has come to define much of what the Salta Collective does and is about.

Since our first evening of performance in June of 2012, we have hosted/facilitated/curated eighteen more performances, all held in spaces donated to us. This has allowed us to offer free dance events and has provided a financial accessibility to audience members. It has also provided us with the opportunity to envision our performances and collective as having a slightly different relationship to a capitalist framework-where we rely less on funding and corporate/capital sponsorship, and more on connections and relationships within our surrounding communities and the resources they can comfortably provide. As an aside, this

goes further into conversations about changing economic structures, which we don't have time to get into at this moment. Sometimes the line between domestic, professional, and artistic is blurred and bartering is enabled in these interactions. Within this framework we have not had to provide any evidence of aligning with values or missions we don't support, and instead focus on supporting the artistic freedom and expression of artists both local and not.

These donated spaces have been widely varied: we have held performances in store-front art spaces, a pristine dance studio, several houses, live/work warehouses, galleries large and small, a cafe, an underground yoga parlour, communes, spaces finished and unfinished, fixed and vanishing, old and new. Each has required a different vision of who might perform there and how, as well as a great amount of flexibility in approach on both our as well as performers parts. It has also required that the audience shifts with us; there is a network of people who consistently come to our events (maybe because the shifting environment keeps things interesting) as well as new audience members at every show (who may come because of an affiliation with the space hosting us that night). Salta has been consistently challenged to rethink and re-approach how we do things, what we value and how we interact with new people and places we come into contact with. We would like to think this has encouraged a desire and willingness to remain self-aware, accountable, and creative as we strive towards feminist, anti-racist, and inclusive support of experimental dance and performance.

Photo / Documentation²

I would like to say a few words about the photos that have been going behind us. I have had a role as the primary documentarian of SALTA. As we are in a moment of time where images are constantly being taken, are accessible, quickly consumable, and Instagramable, it makes me want to resist the role of photographer. Particularly when images of dance are often virtuosic, beautiful, poised.... What interests me in documenting SALTA is how, as an entire collection of photographs, it clearly illuminates the different kinds of spaces that dance inhabits. I also find it meaningful as an exchange with the artists. Though we do not pay the performers they are able to use the photographs however they like.



Photo 3: Dance by Sri Louise. Photo by Chani Bockwinke

Conclusion

We would like to conclude with a set of questions that have come up for us about the project:

-In what ways do our events participate in broader dynamics surrounding gentrification and the use of arts programming in land speculation schemes? What would an active strategy against gentrification look like?

-As a group of white women, in what ways can we actively support, and take leadership from, artists and communities of color? What does de-colonizing our series entail?

-In what ways is the rise of the artist-curator or curatorial collective emblematic of the economic crisis, austerity measures, and the de-funding of cultural and educational institutions that characterizes our contemporary moment?

-How does spectatorship change or morph based on varying presentation contexts for dance? What sorts of performances are nurtured by our presenting model? What pieces are squashed?

-How does our role as curators / logistics people intersect with or support our artistic lives?

We welcome your thoughts on these or any further questions. Thank you.

¹ To learn more about Salta, or to see examples of our work, please visit <http://saltadance.info/>.

² One member of our collective is our resident photographer. This section shifts to the first person singular to reflect her particular role within our collective.

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Biography

SALTA is a collective of seven dancers who curate a free monthly mobile performance series in Oakland, CA. We are invested in feminism, collaboration and dance parties.

Whether locally or internationally, in the end it's clear: it's about choice, about defining who is allowed to be a part of it, allowed to produce and present, allowed to earn money. Programme makers have a function in the art market and however much their opinions may differ, together they delineate the limited field. Who they don't see, who they refuse to see, has ... almost no chance of being seen. (Malzacher, Tupajić & Zank, 2010, p. 14)

--*Curating Performing Arts, 2010*

16. Reflections on Equity in Curatorial Discourse and Dance Presenting

Naomi M. Jackson, Arizona State University

Abstract: This paper considers ethical issues of equity as they relate to dance presenting. The presentation examines the discourse of curatorship during the last decade to illuminate reactionary and progressive ways it promotes fairness with regard to three main areas: 1) the treatment of choreographers, dancers and/or audience members/community partners, 2) the perception of embodied knowledge in relation to conceptual understanding, and 3) the macrocosm of the presenting world including how equity is fostered within/between various networks of curators.

One goal of the paper is to suggest ways in which curatorial rhetoric and practice, while challenging certain unjust, ethnocentric traditions, have also perpetuated discriminatory practices that have failed to promote greater equity and dignity in the field. This includes, for example, valorizing conceptual approaches to programming such that the human component may be overlooked or neglected, and dismissing certain kinds of embodied knowing that are not articulated in ways deemed sufficiently intellectual. Curatorial discourse can also empower select curators and networks over others, such that only a limited number of choreographers are privileged (e.g. those that assume a conceptual approach to dance making); those who do not meet the *au courant* agendas of these privileged people/groups are made inaccessible and invisibilized.

The other goal is to promote principles and practices that follow what ethicists like John Rawls and Margaret Walker argue are fundamental to egalitarian systems. These philosophers assert all persons should have an equal right to 'goods' (wealth, power, reward, and respect); and any inequalities are permissible only if there exists equal opportunity and are arranged to the greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members.

In terms of dance presenting, these perspectives support the belief that curatorial discourse should give varied stakeholders a stronger voice in curation, assure that individuals are more systematically protected from abuse (especially dancers) and that discrimination is minimized at all levels related to body/mind, gender, ethnicity, class, nationality, movement style, age, across the presenting field. The paper will provide examples to elaborate these points, as well as recognize how such values intersect closely with the ecological discourse that has had an increasing influence on arts presenting.

Introduction

This paper considers a core ethical ideal of equity as it relates to the realm of dance presenting in the United States. In particular, the presentation examines the discourse—including rhetoric and practices—of *curatorship* during the last decade to illuminate progressive and reactionary ways it promotes equity within the contemporary “experimental” dance scene. The paper is a reflection of research largely conducted over the past four years of the US presenting scene, as well as changes witnessed in my own dance program at Arizona State University during the same period.¹ Progressive elements include promoting a stronger theoretical framing of performance and individualistic creative practice, as well as exposing US audiences to conceptual and cross-cultural fusion work from Europe and internationally. There are also many artist-curators working to strengthen local communities through diverse performance programming. Reactionary elements involve valorizing conceptual approaches to choreography, and aestheticized approaches to community engagement, such that more fully embodied, kinesthetically complex, and/or humanistic work may be marginalized or neglected. Curatorial discourse and practices also continue to empower select curators and networks over others, such that only a limited number of choreographers remain privileged.

Setting the Stage

Choreographer Trajal Harrell’s career provides an instructive trope to navigate the last decade of contemporary dance curation in the United States. On October 1 and 2nd, 2009, Trajal Harrell performed a solo at The New Museum in New York. The work was the first of Harrell’s now celebrated series “Twenty Looks or Paris Is Burning at the Judson Church”. This performance was co-presented by Danspace Project and Crossing the Line Festival. It was one of three dance performances at the New Museum held in 2009. The others were by Big Dance Theater and Judith Sanchez Ruiz. The curator for this performance was Eungie Joo, and it was organized by Travis Chamberlain, the current Curator of Performance and Manager of Public Programs at the New Museum.

The performance comes at the midpoint of Harrell’s career to date, if one considers his first full-length show, which took place in 2004, at Danspace Project, as the beginning point. When one telescopes out from this particular moment at the New Museum in October 2009, and

traces the primary US venues/festivals where Harrell has performed during the last ten years, the list is as follows:

- Danspace Project, 2004, 2007, 2012
- Dance Theater Workshop, 2008, 2009
- The Kitchen, 2008, 2011
- The New Museum co-presented by Danspace Project and Crossing the Line Festival, 2009
- Institute of Contemporary Arts/Boston, 2010
- American Realness, 2011, 2013
- New York Live Arts (formerly Dance Theater Workshop), 2012
- Walker Art Center, 2013

Having traced similar trajectories of other successful choreographers during the last decade, this list, or map, as I prefer to think of it, reveals part of the deep structure of a powerful presenting network that dominates contemporary dance in the United States. Clearly other networks exist in the US, however, my interest in this paper is in illuminating an elite network that has been shaping the dominant discourse of contemporary dance, especially in New York City. Far from being arbitrary, or diverse in nature, each venue on this network acts as a node on a web of relations linking spaces and individuals, ideas and dollars, across time and space. While passionately, vigorously and courageously committed to bringing “outstanding contemporary art” (ICA/Boston mission statement) to audiences, there exists, nonetheless, this deeply embedded web of presenters.

One of the major axes of this web travels between The Institute of Contemporary Arts in Boston, and the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. These two institutions are part of the National Dance Project, Contemporary Art Centers (CAC) network, and the traffic between them is indicative of the strong connections between all eleven of the participating institutions, and their curators. As explained on their website, this small group decides through a selective, preferential process whose work will be supported (rather than, for instance, through an open call for submissions). The website declares: “*Artists and companies are selected* for support for the commissioning, creative development, documentation, contextualization, and touring of interdisciplinary work through *nomination by CAC members*” (New England Foundation for the Arts, n.d., italics added by the author).

Another of the major axes aligns those auxiliary venues and individuals with an overlapping aesthetic/ideology with the members of CAC. These include, among others, the curators at Danspace, Crossing the Line Festival, and American Realness. One of the reasons for a shared aesthetic and ideology across this network is a recent attraction to a more cerebral discourse on dance. This fascination has been fueled by, and is fueling, a hunger for connections with the visual arts world along with the conceptual orientation of a certain sector of the European art market. Indeed, the very notion of ‘curation’, the theme of this 2014 ACAQ conference, is an indicator of this development. Another reason for the close association is economic in nature. The close association is driven by (and drives) financial concerns, in which presenters find the necessary support to fund projects through mutual reliance and validation. In business speak this ‘authorizing environment’ refers to the individuals/foundations/government agencies/fellow presenters for whom a manager needs authorization and resources to survive and be effective.²

Equity

Before further elaborating the characteristics of this network, I would like to take a moment to discuss the notion of ‘equity’. The idea of equity is at the heart of discussions about ethics, and at the heart of any discussion of social justice. For the purposes of this paper, the term is employed here as a broad concept that concerns lack of discrimination and due process. In a just society ‘goods’ (such as income, wealth, opportunities, praise) are distributed according to egalitarian principles that are transparent in nature. In a fair society, individuals and groups are not disadvantaged (or favored) according to such factors as age, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, disability, regional background, and socio-economic status, among others.

If members of the contemporary dance field see themselves as participants in democratic societies, and contributors to improving those societies, then equity should be something they are concerned about. Indeed, ample evidence exists that such an ideal is important to dance presenters. Consider, for instance, the following statement in the code of ethics of the Association of Performing Arts Presenters:

Organizations are, at base, people, and it is up to the people working in the performing arts field—board members, executive leaders, staff, and artists—to demonstrate their ongoing commitment to the core values of integrity, honesty,

fairness, openness, respect, and responsibility. As members of the Association, our work practice demonstrates concern for the interests and well-being of individuals and organizations affected by our actions. (Association of Performing Arts, Presenters, 2006, italics added by the author)

This statement, which was composed by a diverse fourteen member APAP Ethics Task Force convened in 2006, and then approved by the board in 2008, closely echoes the words of Eleanor Roosevelt, who observed that human rights begin with institutions and the people who make up those “small spaces.” In –

the school or college he attends; the factory... or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks *equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination.* Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world. (Roosevelt, 1958, italics added by the author)

How these notions of equity are realized in civil society was a central concern of John Rawls, a major philosopher of the 20th century. According to Rawls (1999), justice is recognized as “the first virtue of social institutions” and comprises a few main principles (p. 1). The first argues that everyone has an equal right to basic liberties that are compatible with similar liberty for others. The second states that an individual should both have the right to opportunities and an effective equal chance to acquire those opportunities. The third permits social and economic inequalities only in so far as they work to the advantage of the worst-off – i.e. guaranteeing the worst-off in society a fair deal. Rawls also argues for the important place of “public reason”, which requires that the rules that regulate our common life be justifiable and acceptable to all those persons over whom the rules purport to have authority.

“Curating” Dance

If one considers these principles in relation to the dance presenting field in the US of the last decade, it appears that there are both progressive and reactionary tendencies. Turning back to the example of Trajal Harrel, it is possible to see more fully how these have been manifest. Specifically, as a consciously *curated* event within the context of an art museum and dance festival, the performance marks an increasing shift toward a more intellectual discourse in relation to dance, which has both opened up new opportunities and restrained prospects for many

dance artists. How this has transpired will be explored in greater detail in the following paragraphs.

As stated earlier, Harrel's 2009 performance at the New Museum was a curated event that was part of the *Crossing the Line* festival. While curation in the dance context in New York can be traced to The Kitchen in the early 1980s, it is only post 2005 that one sees the term gaining rapidly in currency in the US contemporary dance context. The year 2005 saw the initiation of *Performa*, a festival that ran for three weeks with 25,000 people attending events at more than twenty venues across New York. The festival was organized by RoseLee Goldberg (also notably a curator at The Kitchen in the late 1970s) and its aim was/is, according to the *Performa* website, to demonstrate "the critical role of live performance in the history of twentieth-century art," and to encourage "new directions in performance for the twenty-first century" (*Performa*, n.d). The year also saw the initiation of *Under the Radar*, followed in 2007 by *Crossing the Line*, two other New York festivals including curated contemporary dance events. Other key events followed: in 2010 the Institute for Curatorial Practice in Performance at Wesleyan University was established, along with the *American Realness* festival curated by Ben Pryor; in 2012 Andre Lepecki co-taught a class on curating performance at New York University's prestigious department of Performance Studies, and by 2013, "Everybody's a curator", as Christopher Borrelli's (2013) article in the *Chicago Tribune* so aptly put it.³

The appeal of the curatorial discourse may be traced to its seemingly liberatory promise for both the visual and performing arts worlds. A curated event has the potential to challenge established canons and the primacy of individual art works to draw new relationships based on a particular theme. The *idea* of the exhibition or festival can take precedence over the individual pieces or artists/choreographers displayed or presented. As Peter Taub (a CAC member), who curates performing arts at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, explains it in Borrelli's (2013) article: "Curating is ... scholarship, framing ideas, telling stories — showing the edge that exists between the thing curated and the rest of us". In other words, curation provides the frame for looking at a work.

In the case of Eungie Joo, and Chamberlain, who helped to arrange the Trajal Harrell performance at the New Museum with the curators of *Crossing the Line*, this view is evident and moreover, shown to be closely tied to a somewhat nostalgic and probing/curious look back in time to a period when the arts in the US were seen to be more closely interconnected, less institutionalized, and more intellectual in nature. At a talk in 2011 for *The Museum Educator in the Expanded Field*, Joo mentions the kind of, “interdisciplinary, intellectual, ... really complex landscape,” that existed in the 1970s and should be revived as a challenge to limiting disciplinary boundaries perceived through recent professionalization of visual art, dance, theatre, museum studies, etcetera (Joo, in Pew Center for the Arts & Heritage, 2011).

Indeed, Harrell’s performance itself epitomizes this stance in so far as the work is concept driven and exists in relation to the minimalist experiments of the Judson Dance Theatre. According to Harrell the piece seeks to answer the question: what would have happened if in 1963 someone from the New York voguing scene in Harlem had come down to the Judson Church in Greenwich Village to perform alongside the early postmodernists? In the result, we see an African American performer/creator combining voguing movement with minimal pedestrian movement in a clever commentary on race, gender, sexual orientation, class, seduction, and the act of performance. By emphasizing the creative practice of the individual performer as well as street or urban dance over canonical styles of Western dance—namely, ballet and modern dance, as well as postmodern release technique—we see in this piece an example of work that broadens the notion of what is possible in contemporary dance as expressed through a highly conceptual, historically-oriented approach to dance. Moreover, the discourse makes a space for and values intellectual African-American choreographers.

Behind the Curatorial Curtain

The Dance Theater Workshop lobby was already filling up with the usual blend of contemporary performance insiders: influential choreographers like Maria Hassabi and Yasuko Yokoshi; Lili Chopra, the vice president of cultural affairs at the French Institute Alliance Française, fresh from curating the “Crossing the Line” festival; André Lepecki, associate professor of performance studies at New York University. (La Rocco, in 2008, para. 2)

--Claudia La Rocco, *Artforum*, 2008

The immense success of this piece, and of Harrell himself in both the US and Europe, also suggests, however, the very opposite of the democratization of contemporary dance. As suggested in the opening of this paper, the work exists within a tightly knit network of relations, and convergence of cultural and economic shifts, that is actually extremely narrow, insular, and as I will now argue, unjust in several important ways. Rather than opening up the field of contemporary dance to a broadly diverse range of presenters, choreographers and choreographic styles, the dance field has centered on a dozen or so key power brokers in the presenting realm, and on about the same number of cherished choreographers, all of whom variously write on, award commissions to—and sometimes, even curate—each other.

I perceive the main reason for the entrenchment of attitudes and behaviors to lie in the convergence of paths between an elite group of US presenters of contemporary dance with a select group of international leaders working in this arena (which, again, is not necessarily representative of the many other presenters working throughout the country). The power of this small group is recognized in the following claim:

A frequent source for information about American dance comes from presenter gatekeepers, an informal network of our most important programmers and presenters. They travel widely and take seriously the need to see international work. By and large, these gatekeepers are an asset, but one that needs to be better developed. Because this group has built strong, respected global relationships, sometimes their opinions take on too much influence. (Dickey & Snyder, 2010, p. 6)

More particularly, a US nostalgia for/rediscovery of, the 1960s and 70s, noted earlier, has paralleled the embracing of French-driven conceptual choreography, with both trends finding strong advocates in the (already conceptually driven) visual arts realm of contemporary art institutions like the Museum of Modern Art in New York. While some of this work focuses the spotlight on the history of dance, the other major theme relates to cross-cultural fusions in a postcolonial context (like the work of Akram Khan), with both tendencies engaging in questions about the construction of dance in relation to poststructuralist theory and the ideas of Deleuze, Foucault, and Barthes.⁴

The fascination with French conceptualism can be traced by briefly examining the way Jerome Bel, the quintessential French choreographer of that movement, has been lauded since 2005, in a manner that directly correlates with the rise in curatorial discourse in the US. In 2005 he received a Bessie award, and in 2007 was invited by Goldberg to be part of *Performa 07*. In a discussion prior to the event Bel stated, “I am so happy to be presented in the context of *Performa 07* because I feel more connected to some visual artists than to other choreographers... the people who first started to understand my work had a lot of knowledge in visual art” (Bel, in *Why Dance in the Art World*, 2012, para. 4). In 2008, he spoke at *Crossing the Line*, and returned increasingly in the following years to have his work performed at MOMA, and CAC member institutions including the ICA, Boston, the Wexner, and the Walker.

The easy acceptance of Bel by the visual arts community is understandable when one considers the backgrounds of many curators currently working not only in the visual arts but in the performance realm. Many come from diverse non-dance backgrounds, with degrees in art, English, management, museum studies, etc. Consequently, they “have little or no knowledge of the historical and theoretical lineages of dance and theater that inform contemporary performance making, nor do they have any real, practical, working knowledge of the craft” (Horwitz, 2014). This means that although such curators can often appreciate quality dancing, and dance-making, it is probable that they will gravitate more to work that is easily “readable” from a semiotic perspective – where the dance’s statement or concept is clear and clever. Such is the case with the work of Bel, and Harrell.

The post 2005 onslaught of conceptually driven choreography has been further underlined by an economic situation in the US that favors dance that aligns with Europe and the visual arts. A post-1980 Regan era cut to direct funding for choreographers by the National Endowment for the Arts, paired with European state funding for travel to dance makers, has empowered presenters in the US and led them to favor European funded dance. It is, in other words, likely cheaper to present a fully-funded European dance company than a US company traveling across the country. When further combined with the devastation following the economic downturn in 2008, the CAC and its affiliates have gained even more power as they have increasingly relied on each other to fund those artists they deem worthy. Although on the

one hand this has made for wonderfully collaborative ventures, it has also meant tighter control of the dance market. Within this context art museums have offered contemporary dance a valuable financial pay off in return for the kind of economy of sensuality and vitality that dance offers museum spaces.⁵

Beyond the Margins

“It is usually people who are very well informed ... who understand my work ... Of course, if you are not informed, you go to see terrible things” (Bel, in *Why Dance in the Art World*, 2012, para. 15).

-- *Jerome Bel in conversation with RoseLee Goldberg, 2007*

Which leads to who and what exactly are being marginalized? The breadth of the answer may be answered by considering the number of people working at any one period, and realizing just how many of them are sidelined due to the selective nature of the presenting field. According to the May 2009 report the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, for instance, there were 1,170 choreographers working for performing arts companies, eighty choreographers working for colleges and universities, and 180 independent choreographers. This means a total of at least 1430 choreographers whose work was potentially eligible to be framed as ‘contemporary dance’ but may not have been viewed as such by not fitting in with the dominant paradigm. If one considers the total number of choreographers given by the US Bureau for 2009—14,700—recognition of the potential problem with a system that favors a couple of dozen dance makers rises markedly (United States Department of Labor, 2010).

For myself, I perceive especially unfortunate to be those curators, choreographers and dancers drawn to, and engaged in, more body based, kinesthetically complex work, as well as community dance practices, which are not easily articulated in terms of the favored poststructuralist theorists. During the past few decades somatics, release technique, and progressive pedagogical processes have been evolving in the US to improve dance professionals physically, in terms of range of expressivity and wellbeing, and politically, by providing them an empowering voice in educational and creative processes. These somatics practices have challenged traditional authoritarian pedagogical attitudes and practices deeply entrenched in the dance world, and demonstrated that one can be a sophisticated mover who is healthy and

humanistic. Sylvie Fortin's extensive study, *Danse et Santé* (2008), is an especially powerful body of research illuminating this reality.

Attempting to silence dancers reflects a shift away from somatic sensitivity, and return to more authoritarian structures. The kind of abusive potential inherent in recent curatorial trends is evident in Marina Abramovic's 2011 production for the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, and Deborah Hay's 2012 *Blues* for MOMA. In both cases, participating performers stepped forward to highlight ideological and economic injustices lurking behind alleged progressive aesthetics.⁶ These individual dancers strove to recuperate the voice of the performer in a hierarchical, authoritarian, paradigm that is once again empowering the 'genius' creative artist and his/her artistic, aestheticized vision as supported by powerful granting and presenting structures. However, despite these protests, from a public perspective, the shows went on—business as usual.

Conclusion

Ethicist Margaret Walker has observed that treating others with dignity is about recognizing others as full moral subjects. This requires that people are treated as "self-accounting actors in relations of mutual accountability" (Walker, 2007, 232). At this point in contemporary dance curation, it seems important to carefully consider the moral implications of decision making if the rhetoric of equity is to more closely match the practice. Basic rights of equal access to presenters and funding, along with sensitivity to somatic intelligence, and associated values of nurturing and caring for others, are being threatened by a crystallization of aesthetic, ideological and economic factors that favor (often with the best intentions), elitist, hierarchical, strategies and structures. Greater change is needed if we are not only going to talk the talk, but walk the walk of equity, and its associated ideals of openness, diversity, economic justice, and mutual respect.

¹ I would like to thank the contribution of several individuals for their valuable insights that greatly enriched this paper, both before and following its presentation. The research for this paper is part of a larger book project on dance and ethics.

² The *ecological* discourse that has increasingly converged with curatorial discourse in the US since 2008 also emphasizes the integrated aspects of the arts environment. On the one hand, the notion of a ‘sustainable’ and ‘resilient ‘arts ecology’ highlights democratic notions of inclusivity and diversity, while on the other it reinforces and justifies the existence of entrenched relationships between particular power brokers. See Jackson (2014).

³ It is notable that in the article one of the main reasons given for the spread of the notion of curatorship is the spread of iPods and Facebook, which provide individuals with the ability to ‘curate’ their own music, and visual material. The democratic appeal of these technologies exists in opposition to the attempt by professional curators to remain in control as gatekeepers of taste.

⁴ It should be noted that this specific theoretical lineage is as limited in nature as the aesthetic choices in performance that it is linked with, and subject to similar vagaries of intellectual fashion. At the time of the ACAQ presentation in Montreal, it was noted by others in the discussion following the panel that there had already been a switch to favor other theorists.

⁵ I would like to note that this economic set up benefits solo choreographers who are unattached to a company, or family (especially with children), and can travel easily.

⁶ I refer here to Sara Wookey’s Open Letter to Artists written on 23 Nov 2011 and posted at The Performance Club. <http://theperformanceclub.org/2011/11/open-letter-to-artists/> and Kathy Wasik’s post to The Performance Club from 09 Nov 2012 <http://theperformanceclub.org/2012/11/skin-deep/>.

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Biography

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17. Precarious prestige. Curator as a producer of culture in Europe after the year 1989

Marta Keil, **performing arts curator, PhD candidate, Warsaw, Poland**

Abstract: In my opinion, a curator is a cultural producer equipped with a certain toolbox of competences, working in a clearly defined economic and social context (setting), which makes a marked impact on her professional activities, thereby turning her more often than not into her own product, into a marketable commodity. Tellingly, the profession of an independent curator, i.e., a freelancer working on a project-to-project basis rather than one employed full-time by an institution, emerged in the late 1960s and the early 1970s (in performing arts a decade later), virtually in tandem with the evolution of the job model into a post-Fordist one and with the transformation of free market economy into late capitalism. The very core of immaterial work lies in the generation of communication, in the creation of networks of information exchange, in the production of knowledge (and know-how).

At the beginning of the 1980s, the profession of a curator started to seep into theatre. Its presence in the performing arts is a consequence of the following aesthetic and systemic changes occurring in European performing arts: divergence of artists from linear narration, psychological credibility, and representation of “the real”; substantial growth of the international festival circuit and development of partnership between artists; creation of new space, enabling the progress of independent projects and shifting the focus on a nascent, non-institutionalized system of work that is dissimilar from the workings of already established (and frequently entrenched) repertory theatres. Thus, the entrance of the profession of a curator onto the cultural scene has been spurred by both aesthetic and socio-economic changes.

The 1980s saw the emergence of a number of indie/off-off cultural institutions, including Kaaitheater in Brussels, BIT Theatergarasjen in Bergen, Kampnagel in Hamburg. The present-day premises of Kampnagel and STUK were squatted in the early 1980s; already at that time they constituted epicentres of social engagement, being the beehives of left-wing activity. In 1981, the biggest network of performing arts, IETM (known back then as Informal European Theatre Meetings), was initiated. In 1982, Andrzej Wirth established the Institute for Applied Theatre Studies in Giessen, which pioneered the merger of theory and praxis in theatre education. In 1983, Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker founded the Rosas Group in Brussels, and in 1986 Jan Lauwers alongside Grace Ellen Barkey funded Needcompany, while 1987 saw the establishment of Eurokaz in Zagreb.

The consequences of these shifts became almost immediately visible, not just in the system of theatre production, but in the means of theatre distribution and in the redefinition of the value of theatre and dance; the entire idiom has undergone a change of seismic proportions, as corroborated by Hannah Hurtzig's remark about emerging curatorship in European performing arts: "They [the curators] created a different style of how to talk about theatre and dance, how to write about performance. Within a very short time they were running the discourse" (Hurtzig, in Brandstetter, Hurtzig, Sutinen, & Teuchies, 2011, p. 22-23).

This bottom-up takeover of the debate on performing arts took shape of an intellectual, critical, academic coup, but primarily it manifested itself as unprecedented artistic praxis—as trailblazing work in the domain of the arts. Not unlike the visual arts, the dual process was accompanied by thorough critique (and criticism) of institutionalized (repertory) theatre as well as of the ways of presenting plays, performances, and hybrid spectacles (at that time, theatre and dance increasingly went beyond the traditional, architectural 'black box', and were on the lookout for new spaces, adapting, among others post-industrial sites and converting them into centres of the arts). The theatre and dance of the 1980s is remembered not solely for the emergence of independent physical premises (buildings etc.) devoted to the development of performing arts in their full-on diversity, but also for the aesthetic premises put into practice by the advocates of the second performative turn in Europe, in particular by Robert Wilson, Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker, and Robert Lepage, and by their divergence from mimesis—from mimetic, 'realist' theatre. In terms of theory and practice, this turn was fruitful, yielding unsurpassed meta-theatre, typified by the blurring, and frequently camouflaging, of the plays' framework as well as by the inclusiveness of its governing paradigm, in which audiences were invited to be actively engaged in performances and, often, in one way or another, to co-participate alongside actors and dancers in their on-stage endeavours. The late 1980s and the early 1990s saw a radical change as far as a considerable section of independent theatre was concerned, bringing to the fore the following: new aesthetics (mimesis on the wane); new industry standards in terms of hierarchies and structures; collectives (of freelancers) instead of full-time employment; autonomous groups of performers in lieu of troupes associated with (public) repertory theatres. What was of utmost significance at that stage was the dawn of new

centres for culture, which worked towards conceptualization and implementation of *interdisciplinary* programmes, so as to in consequence attract patrons of a different kind, quite dissimilar from the target audience flocking to somewhat *intradisciplinarian* repertory theatres.

The systemic art production shift that was masterminded and orchestrated then required demanding and time-consuming cooperation between the meta-theatre pioneers and the state officials, among others, the Ministry of Culture, responsible for the allocation of funding. It was the task of curators to convince the decision- and policy-makers to change the outmoded ways of distributing financial resources, in particular with regard to theatre and dance production. Subsequently, as a direct result of these negotiations, activism, and heartfelt lobbying, the so-called independent arts centres entered the theatre and dance circuit, beginning to share the stage with repertory theatres and festival organizers, which practically put an end to the monopoly-like dominance of repertory theatre as a normative model of how theatre and dance institutions should function. The outcome of this sea change is clearly visible at present in Belgium and the Netherlands, where the theatre and dance revolution first took root, and where the so-called independent theatre constitutes the core of theatre production. The Belgian-Dutch model serves as a counterweight to the German *Stadtheater* paradigm, simultaneously providing the very foundation for everything that is currently most intriguing in German theatre, such as the following centres: Kampnagel, Mousontourm, and HAU. This does not mean, however, that the alternative model introduced almost three decades ago is flawless and exemplary. Art production in these independent centres is contingent upon temporary/seasonal projects, making artists and curators alike overtly dependent on the political context and topical issues inherent in the grants system. Furthermore, project-oriented by default, the grants system favours what is deceptively called ‘flexible’ employment, turning its so-called ‘beneficiaries’ into freelancers: *free* to come and go, but at the same time *lanced* by constant fear of redundancy as full-time employment does not programmatically fall within the grants system’s remit. On the contrary, what is valued and often imposed on curators, artists, and other producers of arts is permanent mobility and never-ending flexibility, which have engendered notoriously precarious labour conditions as well as analogously entrenched and unstable terms of employment.

The late 1990s saw further progress of the independent theatre and dance circuit in Western Europe: international cooperation started to bloom, among others thanks to the mushrooming of theatre festivals. At the turn of the century, another significant phenomenon rose in prominence, namely the ‘festivalization’ of the theatre milieu in the post-communist countries of Eastern Europe that had recently opened their borders (and economies) onto the West. Simultaneously, in the late 1990s, the Balkans provided most fertile ground for the development of impressive intellectual powerhouses. Researching and critically commenting upon contemporary performing arts, these were affiliated with two influential magazines: *Maska* in Ljubljana and *Frakcija* in Zagreb. The evolutionary advancement of the budding alternative theatre and dance movement in the region continued into the early 2000s as new educational and academic centres surfaced, including Walking Theory in Belgrade (2000) or Nomad Dance Academy in Belgrade (2005). Also, local nexuses of professional cooperation emerged, such as Balkan Dance Network.

What seems to be of prime significance here is that the development of the curatorial is only one of the elements of the systemic economic shift that Europe has been experiencing (and complying with) since the rise of free enterprise, namely, of late capitalism. With services being its most commodifiable and bankable product, the free market in its latest incarnation boils down to gaining, maintaining, and securing one’s economic superiority through an extensive network of contacts and the unparalleled scope of international cooperation. Thus, the era of cognitive capitalism, polyvocal and poly-centred as it is, poses not just omnipresent and omni-fluid dangers but a series of ever replicating questions that a self-reflexive cultural producer (curator, artists, intellectual, researcher, etc.) cannot avoid confronting herself with. These include the following: what work models are applied in and applicable to the realities of late capitalism? How have these models changed? How can one define the ‘positionalities’ of a cultural producer? What are the conditions of her work? How does she make her choices and how in turn do her decisions impact the art world, in particular the art circuit? What does the present-day system of art production look like? What rules govern it and who is the decision-maker selecting a given artist, purchasing (commissioning/producing) and presenting (staging/exhibiting) their *artwork*? Who is the enabler behind the scenes, including some and excluding others? Who invites and selects artists to participate in the international festival circuit while the majority are dealt a

rough hand and denied access, often for years to come? These questions are not mere fallacies or mannerist exercises in grandiloquence: they touch upon the minefield of multilateral relations and a mesh of firmly entangled interdependence that artists, producers, and audiences—creators and consumers—are subject to, and which are of crucial significance as far as the landscape of contemporary theatre and dance is concerned.

Since the 1970s, the Western culture has been witness to paradigmatic economic, social and political changes concerning processes and conditions of production, referred to by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000) as a transition from industrial capitalism to cognitive capitalism. Economies based on material labour have been evolving towards becoming knowledge-based economies, in the light of which hierarchical industrial societies of the West are transforming into network-structured post-industrial societies. These economic changes (and the resulting social ones) have had, in my opinion, a critical impact on the ways in which art has been produced and distributed over the last several decades.

For that reason, to my mind, a curator is a cultural producer equipped with a certain toolbox of competences, working in a clearly defined economic and social context (setting), which makes a marked impact on her professional activities, thereby turning her more often than not into her own product, into a marketable commodity. Tellingly, the profession of an independent curator, i.e., a freelancer working on a project-to-project basis rather than one employed full-time by an institution, emerged in the late 1960s and the early 1970s (in performing arts a decade later), virtually in tandem with the evolution of the job model into a post-Fordist one and with the transformation of free market economy into late capitalism. The very core of immaterial work lies in the generation of communication, in the creation of networks of information exchange, in the production of knowledge (and know-how). A curator works in a network—not in a hierarchical (vertical), but in a rhizomic (horizontal) system. This does not mean, however, that her agency is curtailed; it is rather the vectors of a curator's influence that aim at different directions. To a considerable degree, curatorial praxis is the product of late capitalism, and as such it embodies its core values and mechanisms, eventually becoming its (often objectified) partner in crime—a tool sanctioning (legitimizing) and

endorsing (justifying) capitalism. Being its product, the profession of a curator provides self-incriminating evidence of precarious labour conditions. Hence, the positionality of a curator generates ambivalence, which requires heightened alertness and unbridled self-reflexivity. Understandably, visual artists have been for decades critiquing the potentially complacent positionality of curators. What the artists find objectionable is the non-transparent mechanism of the redistribution of power, unclear rules of inclusion and exclusion that the artists find they frequently fall prey to, the elitist enshrining of the precarious condition that victimizes a large proportion of the art world/creative sector workers, and—finally—the thorny issue of ownership (who is the author of an exhibition? The artist? The Curator? The viewer?).

The success of a curator as a cultural producer boils down not to the very process of work, but to the ability to pre-emptively single out and publicize an exceptional phenomenon. A case in point is the status of the world's most renowned curators. They are regarded so highly not just due to their uncommon ability to traverse existing networks of cooperation and establish new ones, but primarily due to their unrivalled intuition, which—as a competitive advantage—allows them to have the edge over other practitioners of the curatorial. They are the ones that are the first to blaze the trail, to explore the periphery, and to discover a riveting artist, whom they immediately anoint 'a star in the making', and whose output they instantly analyse, interpret, critique, and market, inviting it (and the artist herself) to be part of the global art world, in consequence.

Being a gifted scout—a finder of valuable trends, captivating if budding movements, and engaging phenomena—is of prime importance. However, being a trendsetter—a curator capable of identifying, critiquing, marketing, publishing, distributing, and promoting a given phenomenon/art work/artist—is equally crucial. Whether in informal chitchat or official talks, dialogue among curators is based on personal relations; what is even more relevant than the money brought to the table is your personal commitment, for instance, what you have to say about the play you have just seen speaks volumes about the honesty and truthfulness of your arts-related choices, recommendations, and curatorial suggestions. In other words, your sincerity is

your calling card; your credibility as a curator is built brick-by-brick by your set of unique professional competences and by your individual predispositions alike.

Working as a curator is a literal work-in-process. The process, as described in the present article, is by no means transparent. It is critically lacking in clear-cut rules and verifiable, 'objective' criteria as a curator's work is based on the affective, on highly individualized choices, on personal competences. It relies on the individuality of curators as well as on the degree of commitment they manage to dedicate to a project at hand and on the extent of predispositions they have recourse to. Maybe this is one of the consequences of the development of contemporary art: its value cannot be measured on the basis of any existing or, even better, objectively identifiable criteria since modern art is, by definition, mercurial, meandering, self-reflexive, resistant to rules, skeptical of schemata, and suspicious of the formulaic. Inclusive, it democratizes its own reception, allowing the audience's intuition and their individual competences to be the judges of its own talent. However, they are stopped, almost in mid-sentence by an intervening (perhaps even interfering) instructor of a process that cannot be ever mastered. A curator is thus an interpreter of the incomprehensible, who is equally liable for contextualizing a given work of art. Still, a particular framework within which she locates a certain piece may be in fact a mixed blessing that sometimes liberates the audience's understanding while at other times limits their comprehension, causing gross misunderstanding.

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Biography

Marta Keil, performing arts curator, created and curates the East European Performing Arts Platform (www.eepap.org). Since 2013, she is the curator of Confrontations Festival in Lublin (www.18.konfrontacje.pl). Co-founder of the MicaMoca.Project in Berlin (2011), she is a PhD candidate at the Polish Academy of Science's Art Institute, and writes for the blog www.fraukeil.wordpress.com.

Translated from Polish by Bartosz Wójcik

18. Curating Difference: The Body and Identity in Contemporary Curatorial Practices

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Abstract: In *Choreographing Difference: The Body and Identity in Contemporary Dance*, dance scholar Ann Cooper Albright (1997) examines how contemporary dance “engages with and challenges static representations of gender, race, sexuality, and physical ability, all the while acknowledging how deeply these ideologies influence our daily experience” (p. xiii). But while Cooper Albright argued that dance offered the possibility to move beyond normative stereotypes over fifteen years ago now, a quick survey of recent dance performances in Montreal, Canada, reveals that performances featuring dancers with white, hetero-normative, able bodies are still those most commonly chosen and programmed by contemporary performing arts curators. So if dance offers an opportunity to move beyond these stereotypical representations of the body and identity, why do performing arts curators continue to show a preference for works that conform to dominant gender, race, and beauty stereotypes? In this paper, I examine the programming and promotional materials of five different dance and performance venues in Montreal, Quebec, to illustrate how contemporary performing arts curatorial practices has the power to both reinforce and challenge these stereotypical representations of body and identity in contemporary dance. I argue for dance curators to recognize the stereotypical representations of the body and identity that are implicitly upheld or re-enforced through their programing choices, proposing that that we must continue working towards developing critically aware curatorial strategies in the performing arts.

Introduction

In *Choreographing Difference: The Body and Identity in Contemporary Dance*, Ann Cooper Albright (1997) examined how contemporary dance “engages with and challenges static representations of gender, race, sexuality, and physical ability, all the while acknowledging how deeply these ideologies influence our daily experience” (p. xiii). But while Cooper Albright argued that dance offered a possibility to move beyond normative stereotypes over fifteen years ago, a survey of the promotional materials relating to recent dance performances in Montreal, Canada, reveals that performances featuring dancers with White, hetero-normative, able bodies are still those most commonly chosen and programmed by contemporary dance curators. So if dance offers, as Cooper Albright suggested, an opportunity to move beyond stereotypical representations of the body, why do dance curators continue to show a preference for works that conform to hegemonic gender, racial, beauty based stereotypes?

In this paper, I examine how contemporary dance curatorial practices have the power to both re-enforce and challenge stereotypical representations of body. Through a case study, which examines promotional visual materials produced by several dance and performance venues in

Montreal, Quebec, I show how the curators can contribute to, as Ramsay Burt (1998) has put it, excluding “strangers and their alien bodies” (p. 6) from contemporary dance spaces.

The Role of the Curator in Contemporary Dance

I would like to begin by defining what I mean by a ‘dance curator’. Although curating is more commonly associated to the visual arts, the concept of curatorial practice has recently gained popularity in the performing arts world. The word ‘curate’ comes from the Latin verb *curare*, meaning: “to care for” (von Bismarck, 2010, p. 50). The *Oxford dictionary* defines ‘care’ as: “the provision of what is necessary for the health, welfare, maintenance, and protection of someone or something” (Care, 2014), which allows us understand how the term ‘curator’ came to mean, according to Beatrice von Bismarck (2010), the person who was “responsible for collecting, arranging, protecting, and presenting the objects that were preserved at an art institution” (p. 50).

In the Montreal dance community, some individuals who were formerly referred to as ‘programmers’ or ‘artistic directors’ now prefer to identify themselves as ‘curators’.¹ However, Douglas Rosenberg (2009), however, has specified that, in contemporary performing arts, curators are not only charged with the ‘programming’ or ‘booking’ the artists or performances in a way that “follows an entertainment model that is contingent on ticket sales and therefore has an agenda that is coloured by audience expectations” (p. 84). Rather, he argued that the curator also “attempts to create meaning from a group of artworks” (Rosenburg, 2009, p. 75), and “create[s] a meta-narrative between pieces, between choreographers and between the content present in the work the audience ultimately sees” (Rosenburg, 2009, p. 76). Similarly, von Bismarck (2010) proposed that the role of the curator has shifted to “Focusing not so much on the objects, information, people, and places that are connected in the [curatorial] set, but rather on the relations between them” (von Bismarck, 2010, p. 54). However, Pip Day (2004) has warned that curators must be aware of:

[t]he critical context of their own practice, their place in the history of cultural practice, and the political choices inherent in mounting any exhibition as well as the impact of these choices on social, political, and artistic production. (Day, 2004, p. 77)

Thus, in the context of the this paper, I will define some of the primary responsibilities of a curator in the Montreal contemporary dance community as: 1) bringing together various artists or artistic elements under a common, unifying (or problematizing) concept, idea, or times/space based event; 2) organizing, displaying, critiquing, or making sense of artistic works or events; and 3) facilitating encounters between artist, audience, and artwork, while remaining conscious of the social, political, and historical context in which this encounter occurs.

Research Approach: Collection and Analysis of Visual Representations of Dance

According to Spencer (2011), we live in a “visually saturated culture” (p. 11), where “the visual is recognized as central to the human condition and to expressions of humanity which pre-date language, affecting our emotions, identities, memories and aspirations in a most profound way” (p. 1). Moreover, Goffman (1987) has highlighted a commercial photo is not a representation of reality, but rather “a ritualization of social ideals” (p. 84), arguing that commercially produced images have become increasingly central to the manner in which meaning is created and communicated in contemporary capitalist society. Indeed, Pauwels (2010) has argued that visual artifacts offer insight on how social norms and values are upheld, since: “images often tend to offer a (not unproblematic) window to the depicted world, but at the same time they invariably constitute cultural artifacts in themselves, and may offer a gateway to the culture of the producer and that of the implied audience” (p. 550).

Since dance curators are charged, in part, with the creation of the meta-narratives or meanings that facilitate the encounter of artist, audience, and artistic work, I assessed that an important task they must accomplish is the conception and production of season brochures that introduced and framed their theatre or festival program for an audience. Of course, curators often work with the images and texts submitted by their artists and collaborate with graphic designers and communications officers to produce these brochures. However, if the curator is charged, as outlined earlier, with creating the meanings and the meta-narratives and meanings between the works, I propose that these brochures can be seen as a visual artifact of this process of meaning making.

In order to begin to understand how dance curatorial practices in Montreal might re-enforce or challenge hegemonic White, heteronormative body stereotypes in contemporary dance, I collected and examined the 2013-2014 season brochures of six different Montreal dance spaces—Tangente, Usine C, Théâtre LaChapelle, L’Agora de la danse, The MAI, and Studio 303—in order to assess the manner in which Montreal dance curators chose to make meaning for and promote their programming.² In these brochures, I examined seventy photographs and their accompanying texts, paying particular attention to how race and gender were depicted, and looking for themes that re-occurred in—or were absent from—this series of images. Although I had not been able to attend every single dance performance that had taken place in Montreal in the 2013-2014 season, I was able to access visual representations of all these performances through these brochures. Indeed, as Matthew Reason (2003) has argued, dance, as an ephemeral art form, can reach a wider audience by relying on “the photograph to extend its existence beyond the disappearing moment of performance” (Reason, 2003, p. 45). Thus, by examining visual representations of dance that were freely available to the general public—as opposed to choosing to analyze the live performances themselves—I not only broadened my data pool, but also recognized the manner in which many people in Montreal might encounter or interact with, and come to understand, these dance performances, whether or not they in fact attended any of them.

Understanding ‘Gaze’

According to Laura Mulvey’s (1975) often referenced theory of the ‘male gaze’, in films, female bodies are subjected to, framed with, and controlled by the gaze of an implicitly male director, camera operator, and spectator. Thus, she proposed that women’s bodies become objects, which exist simply for the enjoyment of the male spectator. Moreover, Hiddleton (2009) has argued that in Western society, people of colour have historically been subjected to a White, colonialist gaze, which labels them as ‘exotic’ or ‘Other’. Indeed, Cooper Albright (1997) has pointed out that there are “multiple gazes... based not only on sexual difference (as in the male gaze) but also on racial, class, ethnic, and physical differences as well” (p. 14).³

Although gaze theory originates from film studies, and was initially used in the analysis and critique of visual media, some dance scholars have adopted this perspective to examine how dancing female bodies might be framed, gazed upon, or objectified by male spectators (for

example, see Manning, 1997). Helen Thomas (2003), however, has highlighted problems with gaze theory such as: its assumption that there is an implicit heterosexual, binary, oppressive relationship between men and women; that men are never objectified by the gaze of others; that women do not find pleasure in being viewed; and, that the person being gazed upon does not have a gaze of their own which they can return on the viewer. Indeed, Sally Banes (1998) has pointed out that while dance may position the (female) body in a position of being viewed or consumed by the spectator, it also presents it as active and powerful, thus challenging the stereotype of women as passive and submissive. Moreover, Cooper Albright (1997) has argued that, “The physical presence of the dancer—the aliveness of her body—radically challenges the implicit power dynamic of any gaze, for there is always the very real possibility that she will look back” (p. 14). As such, Anne Daly (1992) suggested that:

[T]he metaphor of representation as a ‘gaze’ is not as suited to dance as it is to static visual media such as cinema and art. Dance, although it has a visual component, is fundamentally a kinesthetic art whose apperception is grounded not just in the eye, but in the entire body. (Daly, 1992, p. 243)

While I agree with Cooper Albright (1997), Banes (1998), Daly (1992), and Thomas’ (2003) assertion that dance performance can provide an opportunity to escape the idea of an oppressive gaze, and challenge hegemonic conceptions of the body, photographic representations of dance might not offer a similar opportunity. If it is the presence of a live body that allows dance to challenge traditional gender, race, and beauty stereotypes, what happens when the ‘liveness’ is removed from the equation, and the dancing body is flattened and fixed into a two-dimensional image? Indeed, Banerji and Distant (2009) suggest that photographic representations of dance present dancing bodies as “arrested, crystallized, fixed in time” and available for “consumption and contemplation, fetishization and exoticization” (ibid). Moreover, Sontag (1979) has argued that a photograph is potentially more memorable (and thus more influential) than the lived experience it depicts, since: “Each still photograph is a privileged moment, turning into a slim object that one can keep and look at again” (Sontag, in Reason, 2003, p. 50). As such, examining the visual artifacts created by dance curators in Montreal, we can gain a deeper understanding of how curatorial practices might shape social perception of the contemporary dancing body.

Gender

Now, according to Daly (1992), the dancing body has been historically seen, in Western stage dance traditions, as an implicitly female body, and has been judged by hegemonic definition of 'ideal' beauty and femininity. She argued that, "As a product of commerce... the dancer was engaged according to her attractiveness, first as a *female* body, and only then, if at all, as a *dancing* body" (Daly, 1992, p. 159). While what is considered an 'ideal' body might differ in various times and places, Western stage dance forms such as contemporary dance have historically promoted a small, youthful, toned, White female body as ideal (Adair, 1992). And in examining the season programs, one can note that this body is still the one idealized by of Montreal's dance curators. The majority of the women (and men) represented in these images are young, White, thin yet toned individuals with well-defined, symmetrical facial features. There are a few mature dancers featured in the Usine C brochure, and one woman of size pictured in Théâtre La Chapelle's, but for the most part, the bodies which have been included in these visual representations of contemporary dance conform to Western beauty ideals.

Additionally, dominant gender stereotypes have historically depicted men and women as being binary opposites, where men are seen as aggressive, logical, emotionally inexpressive, and dominant, while women are viewed as being peaceful, intuitive, emotionally expressive and submissive (Johnson, 2000, p. 280). Similarly, Boyd (2004) argued that, "Western dance forms also emphasize and perpetuate binary, heterosexual, sexist gender roles in which women are encouraged to be, and are represented as, less physical than, and subordinate to, their male partners" (p. 70). For the most part, the visual materials produced by dance curators in Montreal maintain these heteronormative ideals, and depict female weakness, dependence, and passivity. For example, we can observe images of strong men supporting or restraining weak women, aggressive men ignoring needy women, and all men staring nonchalantly at the camera with women lying at their feet.



Photograph by Julie Artach, of Andr e-Anne Leclerc and David Albert-T th, two artists whose work was featured during the 2013-2014 season at Tangente. This image was commissioned by Tangente for their season program. Image reproduced with permission of Tangente.

What's more, men and women are primarily pictured in oppositional, heterosexual relationships with each other; indeed, there are very few depictions of same sex couples featured, nor pictures of men and women who are not engaged in an implicitly sexual or romantic relationship. Studio 303's brochure is a distinct exception to this trend, where dancers are pictured alone, in mixed groups, or in communal, platonic relationships with one another.

Moreover, women's bodies have historically been and continue to be sexually objectified in various forms of visual and mixed media. According to Fredrickson and Roberts (1997), sexual objectification "occurs whenever a person's body, body parts, or sexual functions are separated out from his or her person, reduced to the status of mere instruments, or regarded as if they were capable of representing him or her" (Fredrickson & Roberts, in Frisby & Aubrey, 2012, p. 69). In Western culture, it is generally the female body that is portrayed as an object, for the viewing pleasure of a male subject. Of course, while it is possible for men to be objectified as well, or for women to possess agency and choose to sexually objectify themselves, it is still primarily women's bodies that are objectified in popular culture. For example, Frisby and Aubrey (2012) have shown how revealing clothing and submissive postures are more often used to objectify women than men in music videos. Similarly, in the season programs produced by Montreal dance curators, we can see several instances of in which women's bodies are placed and framed in sexually provocative poses, and stripped nude in a way that male bodies are not.

This trend is particularly problematic when we observe how the images dance curators choose to represent the women of colour can re-enforce racist, colonialist stereotypes or fetishized conceptions of their sexuality and 'exotic' bodies. For example, I observed three images where their faces or heads of women of colour have not been included in the photos: first, in the *Usine C* program, we see an image of Mélanie Demers, a Montreal-based Black choreographer, holding a hammer, standing in a wide stance with her head hanging down to the floor. Now, while the image is intriguing, and her mastery of the hammer can be interpreted as physically powerful or even threatening, I cannot help but find it is not problematic that the only Black woman featured in any of the season programs I reviewed was in a position that highlighted what Durham (2012) has referred to as a pornographically inspired obsession with the Black women's 'booty' in popular (White) culture. Similarly, there were not one, but two photos that featuring Asian women (Claudia Chan Tak and Emmanuelle Le Phan) whose heads had been cut out of the photo, which plays to what Hiddleton described as the Western fantasy of the 'East' as "a place of sexual intrigue, the locus of a mysterious and desirable femininity" (Hiddleton, 2009, p. 88). Indeed, as hooks (1990) argued, "In a white supremacist sexist society all women's bodies are devalued, but white women's bodies are more valued than those of women of colour" (hooks, 1990, p. 62). Thus, by selecting these images that do not show the

faces of women of colour, or by going so far as to actively crop their heads out of the picture, dance curators risk treating these women's bodies as sexual objects separate from their identities (Frisbey & Aubrey, 2012), and ultimately play into a long, colonialist tradition of the objectifying and fetishizing of women of colour.

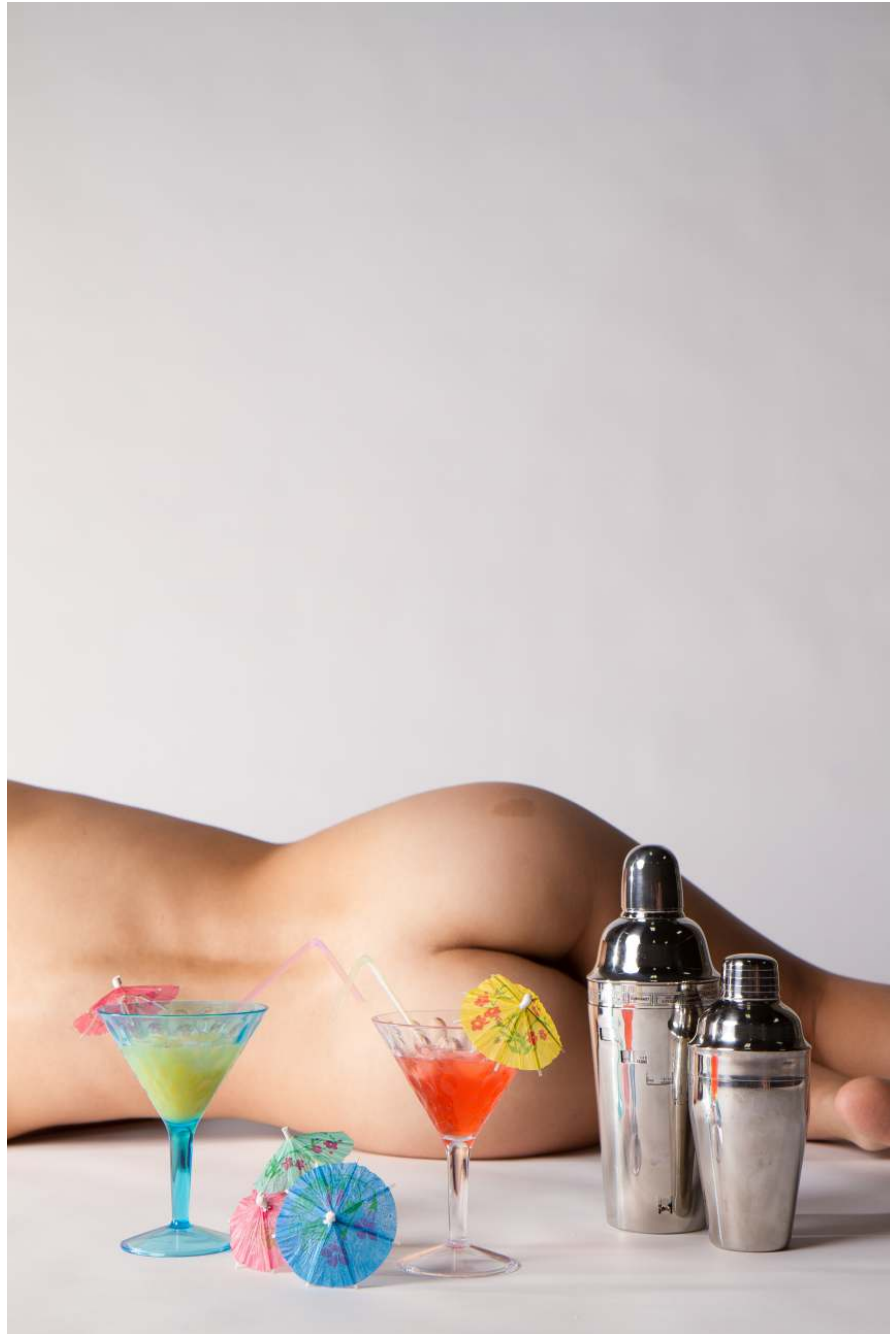


Photo by Alexandre Donato, of Claudia Chan Tak, one of only two Asian women featured in the images analyzed. Photo reproduced with permission of the choreographers. Choreography: *Tout nu tout cru: 5 à 7 nudiste*, by Claudia Chan Tak and Louis-Elyan Martin.

Race

Speaking of race, many dance scholars have shown, dances created by people of colour have long been dismissed in Western society as ‘cultural practice’ or ‘social dances’, and have historically been excluded from arts institutions (Adair, 1992; Boyd 2004; Burt, 1998; Craighead, 2006; Robinson & Domenici, 2010). Boyd (2004) has argued that, “art/dance forms created by people of colour have been de-valued and hierarchically labeled as exotic, primitive, folk art, popular art, ‘raw art’” (p. 71). Indeed, the language used by historians, critics, and curators to describe choreographic works created by Black, Latino, and Asian choreographers has long maintained a ‘high art/low art’ divide between the work of White and ‘non-White’ dance artists. For example, Burt (1998) has shown that many of the Black dancers and choreographers who participated in the American modern dance movement have been excluded from historical accounts based on claims that their work was not ‘art’ but merely ‘entertainment’. Similarly, Allen (1998) has noted dances created or performed by Black artists are not usually described or judged in terms of their aesthetic qualities or conceptual originality, but rather as to whether or not they are entertaining, impressive, politically engaged, or able to represent some element of an essentialist view of ‘Black’ history and identity.

Now, according to Banerji and Distant (2009), “what is excluded from the borders of the image is as significant as what is included” (Banerji & Distant, 2009, p. 42). This statement stuck me as particularly important as I examined the promotional materials of Montreal dance theatres looking for representations of racial diversity. Other than the season program for the MAI—a theatre specifically dedicated to presenting works by “individuals and groups of diverse ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic origins” (Montréal arts interculturels, 2014)—the majority of the season brochures I examined only featured images of White dancers: of the sixty-three other images reviewed, only six photos included images of dancers who were not White.

Of course, one could argue that this lack of racial or ethnic diversity represented in Montreal’s contemporary dance scene is not the fault of dance curators. Indeed, while African-influenced stage dance forms have started to receive a certain amount of recognition within American dance institutions, the dances of ‘Others’ remain obscure in the Canadian stage dance world. As Robinson and Domenici (2010) have noted, university-level contemporary dance programs in Canada continue to show a Eurocentric preference for stage dance techniques such

as modern and classical dance technique, and have made very little effort to integrate non-Western dance forms into their programs. Moreover, the majority of artist grants awarded in Quebec by the *Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec* to dance artists or organizations are still allocated to artists who create work that stems from Western stage dance traditions (Conseil des arts et des lettres, 2013-2014).

But beyond this overarching systemic exclusion of dance artists of colour from the Western stage dance tradition, one can observe that the language and imagery curators use to discuss or describe their work re-enforces its status as ‘low’, ‘popular’, or ‘entertaining’. For example, terms such as ‘street style’, ‘tribal’, ‘raw’, ‘gritty’, and ‘fierce’ to describe works created by these artists of colour, while the work of White artists was described as ‘poetic’, ‘supernatural’, ‘majestic’, ‘sacred’, and ‘surreal’. Of course, we must consider that since artists are routinely asked by theatres to provide descriptions of their work for promotional materials, it is quite possibly the artists themselves who wrote the texts found in the brochures. However, if we remember, as Rosenberg (2009) and von Bismark (2010) highlighted, that the curator is charged with creating the meta-narratives or connections between a group of works, is it not then the curator’s responsibility look not at the individual images or works, but at the group of works as a whole, and to recognize if, as a whole, it continues to reinforce certain hegemonic Western gender and racial stereotypes? Indeed, I would argue that when contemporary dance curators systematically use or accept the use of different terminology to describe the work of White and ‘non-White’ artists, they continue to represent artists of colour not for the merit of their art but for their ‘difference’ from an implicitly White standard.

Steps Forward

Of course, it is also true that many curators have made efforts to highlight the diverse bodies, identities, and artistic practices in Montreal’s contemporary dance community. For example, Tangente has been supportive of street dance artists over the years, and presented five shows featuring or inspired by street dance techniques in their 2013-2014 season. As previously mentioned, the MAI is a space completely committed to presenting intercultural creations by artists of diverse racial, linguistic, and religious backgrounds. Studio 303 launched *Edgy Redux* in 2014, a festival dedicated to presenting works by feminist and queer dance artists. And in

2011, Tangente, Studio 303, and Usine C collaborated to host *Corps Atypik*, a festival completely dedicated to presenting works by artists whose bodies and identities challenged ideal representations of the dancer's body.

But although I applaud Montreal dance curators for creating these spaces or events that provide a performance opportunity to artists who are often excluded or marginalized by the contemporary community, I agree with Robinson and Domenici, who have argued that, "Inclusion is not integration" (Robinson & Domenici, 2010, p. 215), thus suggesting that creating separate spaces for the dances of 'Others' or dancers whose bodies or identities do not conform to White, heteronormative ideals is "a form of ghettoization, [which] can reinforce the marginalization of non-modern dance" (Robinson & Domenici, 2010, p. 215). Indeed, as Craighead has argued, "the notion of allowing space [to 'Others'] is filtered through racist and sexist discourses" (Craighead, 2006, p. 20). Thus, instead of simply looking for ways to 'include' alien bodies in their dance curators must re-examine and reject the racist, sexist Western ideologies that justified their exclusion in the first place.

Conclusion

So while dance performance can, as Cooper Albright (1997) proposed, highlight the fluid and complex nature of the body and identity, I have argued that curatorial practices in the Montreal contemporary dance community also have the power to perpetuate and re-enforce hegemonic gender, race, and beauty stereotypes. In this paper, I have not only examined how curators frame and represent bodies in contemporary dance, but also how certain bodies are systematically excluded from visual representations of dance performances. In order for dance to truly challenge hegemonic Western stereotypes and ideals surrounding the body and identity, I have argued that contemporary dance curators must not fool themselves into thinking that they are 'colour and gender blind', or that their programming choices are based on 'objective' aesthetic judgments as to the value of a given work of art. Rather, they must remember that "visual representation is always 'political', whether intentionally manipulated and censored, or through the embedded discourses and conventional codes which constitute and articulate meaning in our social institutions" (Spencer, 2011, p. 16). Thus, in selecting artist or producing visual and textual support materials for their theatres or festivals, dance curators must remember,

as Craighead (2006) has argued, that in Western society, value judgments are built on “central hegemonic discourses of white heterosexual capitalist patriarchy, which is constructed as the normative standard by which and through which other marginal discourses are measured and articulated” (p. 17). To conclude, I would like urge dance artists, curators, and spectators alike to be aware of and sensitive to the stereotypical body and identity norms that are implicitly upheld or re-enforced through contemporary dance, and continue working towards developing critically aware curatorial strategies in the performing arts.

¹ Of course, I am aware—as my colleague Véronique Hudon pointed out to me—that not every person who is in charge of programming a dance space in Montreal refers to him or her self as a ‘curator’. Indeed, some of these individuals might prefer a different title, such as artistic director, program director, or booker. While a detailed comparative analysis of what constitutes these different roles in a contemporary dance setting would be of great interest to me, it is beyond the scope of this paper. Considering the increasing popularity of the concept of curation in the Montreal contemporary dance community, I have chosen, for the time being, to conduct my analysis in regards to the definition of the role and responsibilities of a curator as outlined above.

² Tangente, L’Agora de la danse, and Studio 303 are organizations that focus primarily on presenting dance or choreographic work, while Usine C, Théâtre La Chapelle, and the MAI offer an interdisciplinary programming of dance, theatre, and performance. In this analysis, I have focused on the photos of dance or choreographic works found in their programs.

³ When I initially proposed this paper, I intended to consider representations of ability or disability, sexual orientation, and age as well. However, due to the limited time available for my presentation, I chose in the end to focus primarily on representation of race and gender.

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Biography

Helen Simard is a Montreal based dancer, choreographer, and dance researcher. She is a PhD student at the department of *Étude et pratique des arts* (Study and practice of art) at the *Université du Québec à Montréal*, and holds an FRQSC doctoral scholarship. Her research examines the construction and performance of social and gender identity in street dance and popular culture. She is particularly interested in how individuals interact with media and commercial representations of their dance practices.

19. Re-enact History? Performing the Archive!

Julia Kurz, curator and educator, Museum of Contemporary Art Leipzig/ Academy of Visual Arts Leipzig, Germany

Abstract: This paper discusses the Exhibition Project and Research Process *Up Till Now – Reconsidering historical performance and actionist Art from the former German Democratic Republic* (8th March - 26th May 2013, Museum of Contemporary Art, Leipzig, Germany). *Up Till Now* was particularly interested in experimenting with different curatorial strategies, which help to initiate and enable an updated reception of historic performative works: what could certain historical works mean today? Could they inhabit new meanings? What remains of performative work as a ‘cultural commodity’? By questioning the relationship between performance and its documentation or ‘mediatization’ (video, photo, oral narratives, texts, scores, requisites etcetera), the curatorial team questioned what it meant to work with these artefacts today, and to stage this documentary material. How could artistic approaches, which denied importance of ‘the object’, be shown in an appropriate way? Moreover, questions around the archive also arose: who works with what material, who gets access, how is/was the material contextualized, and what is put on show or not?

Why did we choose performance from the former East Germany as our topic of research? Historically, artistic-performative positions and process-based forms of art in the GDR were regarded exclusively as a counter cultural movement against the dogmatic state culture of the dictatorship. Even today, some people maintain this point of view. And yet, there is no archive for GDR performance art and actionist art. *Up Till Now* can be seen both as a starting point of a longer process aiming to rethink the actual concepts brought forward through performance art in the GDR, as well as a way to push the idea of what an archive is further.

Through this project, we created a material collection (printed text: primary resources, scientific papers, catalogue texts, letters, film, video, photographs, scores) based on current research as a working basis for all initiated processes. A selection was implemented into the exhibition, which changed during the project in cooperation with all participants.

The invited participants were performers/curators who had worked in the GDR, art critics, theater researchers investigating performance and its mediatization, as well as international contemporary performance artists. The latter were invited to develop commissioned projects based on their own artistic practice/research and the various offered encounters (including direct dialogue during a panel discussion, via e-mail, workshops etcetera) and were shown successively as part of the exhibition process. The rooms changed constantly, some interventions stayed permanent, some performances only left traces.

This text will mainly deal with the research and exhibition project *Up Till Now – Reconsidering historical performances and actionist art from the former German Democratic*

Republic”,¹ which my colleague Anna Jehle and I curated at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Leipzig, Germany.²

I see my curatorial practice as being informed mainly by critical education theory. By this, I mean that I see myself as a learning and knowing (or not knowing) person within the exhibition process like anyone else: the visitors, the people I meet there, the ones I invite, artists, educators, teens, and adults. I constantly try to avoid imposing certain knowledge by making multiple approaches to receiving the work available, which means I am continually inspired by all the new topics, meanings and opinions that come up throughout an exhibition process. But—and this is important—I allow myself also to fail, as the failures are especially good opportunities to reflect upon the situations I facilitate.

In line with this approach, *Up Till Now* was not only inspired format-wise by the object of its study, i.e. performance as a temporal and spatial process between people. Our subsuming display allowed the exhibition to be a space of events, a stage, laboratory, workshop and research-archive, as well as a space to present art works. Indeed, in my perception, it unfolded, like a performance art piece itself, as a temporal and spatial process.

To a certain extent we were focusing on announced public programs as a main part of the whole exhibition and research process: we had lectures, film-screenings, table talks, workshops and a blog, plus six new commissioned art works, which were developed during the exhibition period and mostly entered the space in the last weeks of the process. Some of them stayed as installations, some only left traces, which were partly also reused, and some just disappeared ...



Room View Herold/Klimová; 2. Panel Screening)

(Images: 1.

As I am unable to address the entire project *Up Till Now* in this text, I will focus on some of the conceptual details. Before I start I'd like to introduce you to a method I learned from a

colleague, namely Manuela Zechner, a researcher and artist based in London and Vienna and part of the Radical Care Collective, with whom I worked recently. She calls it the 'Future Archive'.³ I will use her method now to allow us to travel through time:

In a far future:

Some curators and art-historians gather during an opening. On display: Re-enactments of historical performative works, documents like photographs, Videos, props... the usual suspects when it comes to historical performance art... you know what I mean... really old stuff from 2014.

Something one of these people in a far future then might say: Crazy, in the second decade of the millennium... I think it was the 3rd wave of feminism, wasn't it? They still struggled so much with gender issues and racism, even in the cultural field ...

A possible reply: Yes, amazing, these works by so and so were, above that, really challenging the neoliberal system back then. Today, you cannot imagine that they still did not know how to deal with immaterial labor ...

Someone adds: Indeed, they still had money back then, right?

Back to now:

I propose this method because it might be able to explain, in part, what we were trying to achieve with *Up Till Now*. The main idea of the future archive is to learn more about the status quo: about today. But also to imagine a future where things have changed, and what this future might look like. There might be a different political system or world order. This can be utopian or dystopian, whatever you'd like to imagine. But mainly, imagining a future archive is about understanding the here and now: the starting point, and where things go into this or that direction.

You can think of various scenarios of how today's performance might be read in a far future, and I think in cultural work there is a lot about imagining a future together. At the same

time, this method creates a possibility to also focus on the past, imagining its alternative endings in the here and now, and considering how history is read and ‘constructed’. Perhaps that was why I ended up examining the performances of artists working during the GDR era during my studies in theater and post-colonial studies: because the ‘handling’ of the history of GDR Performance in the 1990s/early 2000s made me suspicious.

Readings of performance works from this era were (and are to a certain extent still) very much guided by specific intentions: to display resistance, opposition and a counter culture in the then socialist workers and farmers state, the German Democratic Republic (today’s former East Germany), but only in opposition to the current politics of the now reunited Federal Republic.

I don’t want to criticize displaying resistance, opposition or counter culture, but—and this is the point—in all these reflections on the nonconformist art scene, I noted a lack of discourse on what kind of art was actually being created during the early 90s, especially in relation to contents and forms of the artworks. Indeed, the texts I could find on these performances were often only accompanied by some glyphic images, which testified that something had happened during this time period, but you could only guess what. Moreover, what you could read about—both in interviews and text—was the working and living conditions of artists were at that time. This is, of course, an important topic in respect to the instrumentalization of art in the socialist regime, where art should follow politics and artists were threatened by GDR's secret service: the *Stasi*. However, you really had to search for more specific information on or descriptions of the art works itself. Fortunately, this has changed recently, as there is more and more research being conducted on this topic.

Additionally, I found there was a lack of reflections on what these performances could mean for us today, within the recent system—where resistance is even harder, as there is no inside and outside the system anymore—, and opposition is very well organized in the realm of political parties and Realpolitik, where there is more about the organization of processes rather than topics or urgencies (Latour 2005).

In his quasi-Manifesto, entitled *From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik*, Bruno Latour (2005) demands a fundamental change in politics within Western democracies: “We might be more connected to each other by our worries, our matters of concern, the issues we care for, than by any other set of values, opinions, attitudes or principles” (Latour 2005, p. 4). He calls the topics that unite us ‘The Things’, a term which he argues “designates both those who assemble because they are concerned as well as what causes their concerns and divisions” (Latour 2005, p. 13). Indeed, Latour calls out: “It should become the center of our attention: Back to Things!” (Latour, 2005, *ibid.*). By this, he suggests overcoming the practice of a representational democracy (with its political apathy), and starting over to deal finally with the ‘things’ themselves. It is very much this that I am talking about: it seems to me that there is a need for much more, and constantly evolving, processes around actual things, topics, questions—or urgencies (cf. Rogoff 2008).

Now, getting back to *Up Till Now*, and my interest in examining GDR Performance, one thing that really puzzled me was the observation that, after the fall of the Wall in ’89, a number of performative artists assessed their works as ‘joking around’ or ‘playful experiments’. Most of them, so it seemed, did not really refer to their works as ‘serious’ art pieces. Such a puzzled feeling is maybe the starting point for every research process; my curiosity encouraged me to look closer and think of other ways of addressing the respective performances: this enabled *Up Till Now* to become a process of re-encounter with the artworks, without pre-determining certain goals.⁴



Images: 1. Research Archive via Lewandwosky; 2. Workshop with Barbora Klímová.

As I mentioned, *Up Till Now* was comprised of various parts. We tried to explore new ways of exhibiting and documenting Performance Art, and how to integrate performances into exhibitions. Like I said, our focus was the transfer of historical performances into a contemporary discourse, in order to re-question this material. Some of our initial questions were: How could we deal with archival material within the exhibitions? Were there possibilities of imagining a performative/performing archive, which was polyphonic and flexible, and expanded not only over the exhibition process but also within the space?

We understood all the events that were taking place within the process as part of this living archive, starting with an empty room—our lab—and several invitations. We invited Jörg Herold, Via Lewandowsky (part of the group *Autoperforationsartisten*) and Gabriele Stötzer (part of the group *Exterra XX*), three artists working with performance during the GDR era, as well as four young artists all working on various questions of performativity⁵ and some contemporary witnesses from the subcultural context of the GDR, among others. We also invited Barbora Klímová, an artist from Brno, Czech Republic, who created the very exciting project series *Replaced Brno 2006*, which contained of re-enactments of performances from the ‘70s and ‘80s and was shown during the exhibition.⁶ Moreover, Barbora was also invited to give a performance lecture and a workshop with students of the local university and art academy. During the public panel entitled *Encountering Performance*, the visitors of the museum were invited to enter into a dialogue with all the participating artists. Through round table discussions and screenings, artistic strategies and approaches became part of a contemporary discourse.



Image: Table Talks, Panel "Encountering Performance"

Most importantly, we did not claim that *Up Till Now* was an objective or complete historical recreation of Performance Art from the former GDR, nor did we want to create a linear narrative or generally valid categories. At first, this caused some confusion within the regional scene of researchers and experts dealing with performance from that time. Rather, we began from our subjective starting point into a research process, which turned into a collective once more people got involved. To once again refer to Latour (2005), we felt that approaching ‘things’ should begin and end in the ‘always-new constellations’ that gather around them, a term Beatrice von Bismarck (2012) often uses. We felt that our focus should be on what has actually been said, rather than a predefined methodological approach, so we continually adjust the project with every new step it took.



Image: Commissioned Performance "Freedom of Sleep" by Stefan Hurtig

This approach also applied to the permanent installation of texts and film material—documents out of private archives owned by Gabi Stötzer, Jörg Herold and Via Lewandowsky, amongst others—, which expanded and changed during the exhibition. Mostly, these artifacts contained of the texts I was referring to above: the already written history of GDR Performance. There were scans of A4 and A3 prints from existing catalogues, research-materials and books accessible at the library of the museum. This allowed visitors to read up on GDR performance, go independently through the material, and compare different texts on or pictures of the same work in various catalogs. We made some efforts to mediate the characteristics of the archives for the visitors, and possibly deconstruct them, and addressed some of the difficulties of working with and documenting performance as a live medium. But they could also just be read.⁷

Moreover, this material collection was a starting point for the artists participating in the project, which turned their work, from both a practical and theoretical approach, into a 'performative archive'. The process was a collaborative one, which was very much based on exchange, and practical as well as theoretical reflection. It was very important for us was that all the invited artists were interweaving the historical material with their own artistic practice, which

meant the extraction of content related and formal aspects for a present discourse. As such, *Up Till Now* aimed much more for a conscious transformation of works, instead of the ambition to restage or re-enact close to the original.



Images: 1. "After the Transformation" by Ana Hoffner; 2. "The Ground. The Benches." by Ingrid Cogne and Elske Rosendfeld

As you can see, and what was also unexpected for most of the visitors, was that we did not lay importance on the artifacts and documents, nor did we focus on preserving and conserving. Rather, we emphasized their use, re-use and appropriation: the reinterpretation of a work's productivity and reception today. What does it create between past and future?

We all know that history is a construction, serving mostly a certain political agenda relating to questions of power: who is allowed to deal, in which way, with what historical material. For example, with *Up Till Now*, we were often facing the objection that the time hasn't come yet to look at GDR performance in this way. But what is *this way*? Clearly, it is totally important for any scientist having an agenda or certain interest, but I would like to question the restrictive politics of the cultures of remembrance, which we encounter here, even in a supposedly unproblematic field. And what comes with this is the practice of categorizing—especially in the scientific field—which creates mighty narratives through exclusion and what makes *another way* to *this way*. (These issues, I think, should not exclusively be discussed in the cultural or scientific field, or in cultural politics, as they are addressing a much wider context. But I think they should be negotiated much more openly in our every day practice.)

Image: Comissioned Performance "Ich-AG Geige"



For me it is important to say—as simple as it sounds—that we do not need to reproduce these habits. Especially in the arts, and from my point of view as a curator and art educator, we have an amazing opportunity to question this practice and challenge anything that evolves out of that. We can explore alternative ways of introducing things, instead of supporting a canonization that supports hegemonic and dominant knowledge. In that way I am especially interested in encounters within exhibitions, which I like to envision as coming together on an equal level. Every element—whether artist, audience, prop, artwork, or text—brings a certain knowledge to a project, and is articulated during the process of encountering in various ways.

Exhibitions, performances, and events can be these spatiotemporal structures where things can become public in the form of encounters (Bismarck, 2012). One must remember that the exhibition makers, as well as visitors and objects, are parts of the sequence and parallelism of constellations that are established within the exhibition. As Irit Rogoff once suggested: “The exhibition is more an occasion, which is characterized by its potentiality, rather than by its manifestation” (Rogoff, 2011).

Special thanks to Elizabeth Gerdeman and Helen Simard for proofreading this paper!

¹The German Democratic Republic (GDR) was a state within the Eastern Block, which was established in the Soviet Zone after World War II; it existed from 1949 to 1990. During the process of the German Reunification in 1990, the German Democratic Republic joined the Federal Republic of Germany.

² For further information visit research-uptillnow.tumblr.com (german only), <http://issuu.com/uptillnow/docs/uptillnow-issuu> (a documentation brochure, German only) or www.gfzk-leipzig.de/?p=19111&lang=en (English Press Release).

³ <http://www.futurearchive.org/>

⁴ I was just guessing, but I believed this attitude perhaps stemmed from the often repeated opinion in the 1990s that, in a closed society like East Germany, the ‘real’ discourse on Performance—namely discourse coming from the West—reached the arts scene via smuggled catalogues during the 80s. As such, German performance from that time period was often understood as late replies to works by Wiener Aktionismus, Landart, or Joseph Beuys, and for that reason were judged by some to be not very relevant. Now, if you hear something like that being said repeatedly about your work, I suppose you might believe it after a while. There is a lot that can be said about adapting to or reproducing stereotypes—which of course is not unique for the reunion process between East and West Germany.

⁵ We invited Ana Hoffner, Vienna, Austria (www.anahoffner.com), Stefan Hurtig, Leipzig (www.stefanhurtig.de), Thomas Janitzky, Leipzig and Elske Rosenfeld from Berlin (www.elskerosenfeld.net)

⁶ For more on Barbora Klimová's project *Replaced Brno 2006*, please visit www.barboraklimova.net

⁷ We chose to display our research in this way, as simple copies, since it is the way we are most often encounter historical performance art, before we try to dig deeper.

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Biography

Julia Kurz, M.A., is a freelance curator, writer and educator working for institutions such as the Museum of Contemporary Art Leipzig and Werkleitz – Center for Media Art in Halle (Saale) and within independent transdisciplinary collectives. Kurz has an MA in Theatre and Arabic Studies and did her courses in Leipzig and Damascus, Syria. From 2011 until 2013 she participated in Beatrice von Bismarck and Thomas Weski's *Cultures of the Curatorial* at the Academy of Visual Arts, Leipzig.

20. Performance Patina: Notes from a Lecture on Curating the Material Traces of Live Events

Abigail Sebaly, Walker Art Center

Abstract: At a time when museums have a growing interest in presenting and collecting performance, the dialogue often centers on the ephemeral, immaterial nature of the work. But equally vital are the objects that endure—the costumes, sets, and other design elements. In 2011, the Walker Art Center acquired the Merce Cunningham Dance Company’s complete archive of sets and costumes, comprising over 60 years of materials. Because Cunningham collaborated with some of the most prominent visual artists of the 20th century, it is not surprising that the museum would be interested in these pieces. But more than just resting on the name recognition of artists such as Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, and Andy Warhol, the collection poses a major shift in thinking for curators. Many of these performance objects, even if handcrafted by seminal figures in modern art, have the quotidian wear and tear of objects of use. By presenting these costumes and sets, with all of their scuffs, pills, and original stage patina, in a white cube gallery setting, there is an inherent challenge to convey the movement and live events that once embodied them. How can curators help people to engage with these objects not only through their visual attributes, but also on a more kinesthetic basis? Do the objects of performance always have to be framed by live performances, even though the gallery setting may compromise or alter the original works?

This paper will use the Walker’s Cunningham collection as the basis for a discussion on curating performance objects in a museum setting. I will share primary resource materials, including images and first-hand anecdotes from three recent Cunningham-related research exhibitions. I will also discuss how movement-based gallery tours have been devised to reframe visitors’ engagement with the Cunningham materials. In a larger study of performance curation, the material traces of performance are an imperative concern.

At a time when museums have a growing interest in presenting and collecting performance, the dialogue often centers on the ephemeral, immaterial nature of the work. But equally vital to consider are the objects that endure—the costumes, sets, and other design elements. For three years, my work at the Walker Art Center has been concentrated on the tangible footprints and traces within the Merce Cunningham Dance Company Collection.

In December 2011, the Merce Cunningham Dance Company (MCDC) delivered the final performances of its 58-year history in the vast Drill Hall of New York City’s Park Avenue Armory. Two years earlier, choreographer Merce Cunningham passed away at 90, initiating a legacy plan that included an extensive round-the-world farewell tour and the ultimate disbanding of the company. As one era of dance and performance history came to a close, another gained

new momentum at the Walker Art Center. In 2011, the museum acquired MCDC's complete archive of sets and costumes, comprising over 60 years of materials and over 3500 objects that range from expansive backdrops and set elements to costume pieces, as well as a selection of posters, design sketches, and photographs. Not only was this an unprecedented acquisition for the Walker, but it has also prompted a fundamental shift in the way museums are approaching the collection and preservation of performance.

Over the long life span of the company, Cunningham worked with some of the foremost artists, musicians, and filmmakers of his generation, such as long-term collaborators John Cage, Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, as well as Andy Warhol, Bruce Nauman, Frank Stella, Charles Atlas, Roy Lichtenstein, Ernesto Neto, and Rei Kawakubo. Many of these artists already had existing ties to the Walker, and are now also represented in the Cunningham Collection. Foreshadowing the larger acquisition of Cunningham materials, in 2000 the museum independently acquired the 1968 set for *Walkaround Time*, a series of screen-printed moveable plastic structures based on Marcel Duchamp's *The Large Glass*, and realized by Jasper Johns.

With the company's entire archive of materials on hand, rather than selecting a few key items or representative pieces, the Walker diverged from its typical collecting practices and matriculated the complete corpus of materials into its permanent collection. Instead of making discrete qualitative choices, such as selecting one leotard to represent a dance that had seven total, this strategy meant that all seven would ultimately be acquired. In terms of shaping the acquisition, the process of selection was guided by the museum's holistic commitment to the creative output of Merce Cunningham and his collaborators, rather than through a more micro piece-by-piece sorting and valuation process. Instead of only resting on the name recognition of artists such as Johns, Rauschenberg, and Warhol, the collection's content, breadth, and cumulative nature pose a major shift in thinking for curators and museum visitors alike.

Many of these materials, even if handcrafted by major figures in modern art, have the quotidian wear and tear of objects of use. Some have been packed and repacked hundreds of times, pilled, mended, steamed, faded, thrown in the wash. Some of the garments retain the scent of their use and composition—the sweetness of fabric softener, occasionally the sourness

of sweat, the earthiness of a bear fur coat from a 1950s-era second hand shop. As the objects were arriving at the museum, the qualities of their use stood out starkly as clear traces of their functionality. Museums are obviously prepared to handle pieces that are fragile or worn, but there is something unique, extraordinary, and even still contentious about these pieces. But there is an ongoing question of how the implicit value is defined, and where it lives. I do think that it is important to realistically address both the unique possibilities as well as the challenges that these pieces can pose for curating exhibitions.

My own experience in working with the Cunningham Collection, in the contexts of both the visual art department and the more registrarial, hands-on side of the operation, is that there is a conceptual enthusiasm that can sometimes be at odds with the pragmatic realities of owning and caring for the actual materials. When a sample selection of materials is spread out on a worktable, we can catch a glimpse of the astonishingly saturated hues of Rauschenberg's 1960s dyeing techniques, intricately detailed accents and patterns, as well as the more quotidian wear and tear of workhorse tights and leotards.

In the best of lights, this scene is a marvel of diverse materials. But from a more critical perspective, the costumes, in this form, can appear small, wrinkled, bearing none of the volume or life of their original owners. My concern is in how we avoid the 'pile of laundry' misconception that these items could fall into when handled without thorough consideration. For those who are familiar with Cunningham and the legacy of his collaborators, there will be an inherent appreciation of the materials. But we should not assume that everyone has this level of familiarity, or, that when visitors enter the gallery space, they are ready to make the conceptual leap from stage to exhibition context.

Exploring the Material Traces

One way of drawing out new insights into these objects is to investigate the material traces that they bear. In this context, the traces of performance are not only the objects themselves, but also as the unique wear and erosion of the objects. The sets and costumes are now inert, seemingly totally separate from the live events that they were once a part of. But rather than casually dismissing the pills, the wear, and all of the quotidian traces of use, how can we gain a

new understanding and appreciation for them as participants in those live experiences? In the case of the costumes, I am interested in exploring how the traces of movement serve as a form of documentation, providing sustained impressions of the particular bodies and movements that were undertaken within them, like footprints, or strata of experience. For example, Cunningham's solo costume for the dance *Root of an Unfocus* (1944) has the dirt-defined imprints of Cunningham's own body and movements. A soiled knee indicates the kind of repeated work that the choreography demanded of him in this dance. Likewise, in his stretchy blue leotard top for *Pictures* (1984), the fabric around one elbow is permanently stretched and blistered in the shape of Cunningham's own elbow.

The material traces that I reference in these objects differ from other kinds of more intentional movement traces that are visible in other art works. In pieces such as Yves Klein's *Anthropometries* or Trisha Brown's untitled series of footprints, there are maps of live events in which the traces of movement are more deliberately composed and foregrounded, bodies and movement tracked in paint and ink on flat surfaces that can then be hung on the gallery walls. The traces are intentionally recorded at the outset, intended to be a central part of the works, rather than incidental byproducts of constant use and interaction. In a museum's white cube context, their medium and formal qualities may pose less of a challenge than a worn leotard or pair of tights.

Balancing the close reading of these materials

While I have described a practice of closely examining these performance objects, in order to study their traces of movement, I do not mean to imply that every scuff or scratch is the product of repeated movement that can be mapped to specific choreographic gestures. Indeed, the story behind a particular trace may not always lead to a logical insight about the way the material was used in performance. For example, the costumes that Jasper Johns realized for Cunningham's dance *RainForest* (1968) run counter to this theory of repeated use. Andy Warhol, the creator of the *Silver Cloud* (1966) pillows that served as the dance's décor, originally suggested that the dancers perform nude. Johns came up with flesh-colored leotards and tights as a compromise. Upon Cunningham's request for the artist "to roughen them up a bit, 'as if the skin were torn'" (Cunningham, in Brown, 2009), Johns ripped and shredded the

flesh-colored garments, intentionally distressing the fabric and pre-empting the wear that would eventually occur to these costumes over time. The traces were deliberately produced at the outset, as opposed to emerging as a byproduct of movement and use. In this discussion of the objects of performance, it is important to acknowledge the distinction between remnants of repeated bodily wear, versus episodic traces of movement that are intended, at the outset, to be inherent parts of the final work.

Incorporating these materials into exhibitions

How do we go about seeing and presenting these objects in a new way, emphasizing their relationship to the performances that they belonged to, but without overly-valorizing them as relics? It would be impossible to read meaning into every individual scuff and mark, in a forensic, CSI way of looking. And as Jasper Johns' *RainForest* costumes illustrate, sometimes the wear and tear can be a deliberate choice. But a shift in perspective, acknowledging and appreciating the traces of movement, can give us new respect for the objects of performance, and a deeper understanding of the movement and live events that once embodied them. Additionally, how can we foster an engagement with these objects through a more kinesthetic lens? Certain costumes may be better featured without a mannequin form, in order to highlight more close-range details that lend themselves to the proximity of the gallery visitor's viewpoint, such as the unique pattern of wear on Cunningham's costume for *Root of an Unfocus*. Constructing different physical pathways within the gallery can also help urge participants to gain a heightened awareness of their own bodies and movements as they make their way through the space. Adapting the means of more traditional museum tools (labels, wall didactics, audio/video elements, gallery guides) to speak to a more kinesthetic perspective will also help increase the appreciation of objects of performance. For instance, a wall label could describe not only the visual characteristics of an object, but also provide other sensorial provocations, such details on the weight of the piece, or the kinds of movement that were executed within it.

Do objects of performance always have to be framed by live performances, even though the gallery setting may compromise or alter the original pieces? In the process of developing this lecture, I also came across a relevant piece by Bosnian-born artist Bojan Sarcevic's, *Favorite Clothes Worn While S/He Worked* (2000). To make the work, Sarcevic asked working class

laborers to set aside their uniforms and instead perform their jobs in their finer non-work clothes for two weeks. The used clothes, with all their remnants of work and wear, were then displayed in a gallery setting. While a broader commentary on politics and labor were no doubt among the project's broader aims, these larger concepts can only be arrived at through carefully examining the workers' clothing with an attention to how it came to be marked up. The material traces of labor and movement give the clothes an explicit rootedness to the bodies that actually wore them, a connection, again, that I have also found with the Cunningham costumes.

We are constantly making new movement traces in our everyday lives, physical footprints of our own actions and movements. Movement traces are such an ordinary part of our existence that we may overlook them in both life and art. But the objects of performance will give us more if we ask more of them, even after they have been retired from their active use in performance. In terms of displaying these objects in a museum setting, the question is often raised: Will these objects hold up to the close scrutiny of the gallery context, particularly when viewers can peer, at close range, at features that were formerly concealed by distance, moving bodies, and stage lighting? Yes, the objects handle it. But our appreciation for how they have been used, and why they are considered objects of performance, will be enhanced by our awareness of the movement traces that they contain.

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Biography

Abigail Sebaly, MA, is currently the Cunningham Research Fellow at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. Since July 2011, she has been cataloguing and researching the Walker's acquisition of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company's sets and costumes, which includes over 3000 objects. She has also worked with Walker curators to produce three exhibitions on Cunningham's collaborations with Robert Rauschenberg, Ernesto Neto, and Comme des Garçons founder Rei Kawakubo. Prior to this, she was the director of special projects and administrative assistant to Merce Cunningham at the Cunningham Dance Foundation in New York. She was also a Fulbright Postgraduate Scholar in Melbourne, Australia, where she focused on the practice of performance curation with Kristy Edmunds at the Melbourne International Arts Festival. She

holds a BFA in dance and a BA in English from the University of Michigan, and an MA in the humanities from the University of Chicago, where she wrote her thesis on comparative practices of performance curation. She is also a 2013 graduate of Wesleyan University's Institute for Curatorial Practice in Performance (ICPP).

21. *How to be when we see: Social codes, spatial domestication, and the performance of viewing*

Sky Fairchild-Waller & Cara Spooner

Abstract: To curate performance is to indirectly curate the performance of its viewing. The act of viewing art in a space like a gallery activates certain social codes that are enforced by both the construction of the space as well as its temporary inhabitants. The combined presence of these variables dictate where to move and look, when, before and after what, with and for how much time; by choosing how to navigate in/through/around/and out of the work and the frameworks that contain it, the viewer-cum-agent simultaneously performs their viewing. Whereas a theatre might conjure responses, a gallery, in this sense, fosters impulses. Curating performance thus recreates, mirrors, and displaces the pre-established dynamics of power and agency found in the act of viewing.

Performance artist Cheryl L'Hirondelle, in an interview with Wanda Nanibush in *FUSE* (2008) suggested that "...we are in a state of being a *vidience*. Audience comes from Shakespearian times when people would go to hear a text, but now we are a *vidience* because we go to see or to witness" (p. 29). As viewers decidedly perform their viewing in relationship to the social constructions each space bestows upon them, this presentation will endeavour to explore how curating, making, and viewing contemporary performance necessitates a performative negotiation with spectatorship, agency, and choice making.

The relatively recent attribution of performance to curatorial practice as a discipline suggests a negation of this history of viewing—performance is proposed as novel or 'new' for the gallery space—and thus a polarization of legitimate and non-legitimate forms of performing. With an eye towards promoting the performance of viewership into the discourse of curatorial practice—especially of performance—*How to be when we see* will draw on case studies from the performance practices of the co-presenters to examine the performance of viewership as both an artistic and curatorial blind spot. Our presentation will draw on Amelia Jones' writing on intersubjectivity, Antonin Artaud's views of the sempiternal self, amongst others, to examine the histories, implications, and futures of how to be when we see.

Paper

How to be when we see: social codes, spatial domestication, and the performance of viewing is a cumulative and critical reflection on our experience as performers who studied dance and began working in predominantly 'alternative' performance contexts, whether through the frame of performance art, installation, intervention, or media-based work. In addition to our own personal practices—and in order to pay our bills—we have also worked independently as performers-for-hire during the past decade. Most of this work has been created and exhibited in a predominantly Visual Arts context, with the actual site of performance varying widely from a typical gallery to a river bank, library, fountain, or ditch. It is from these experiences that we've

endeavoured to capture and distill some insights from both the vantage of performer-as-artwork and performer-seeing-artwork in terms of the questions, considerations, and interrogations that might empower the curatorial process when engaging with contemporary performance.

Now, an important disclaimer: what follows, both in the examples we'll share and the pontification we'll offer, will operate on the premise that in contemporary performance curation, we are predominantly discussing performance which is intended to exist outside of the confines of a proscenium-based structure or theatre. As all of us know, the theatre—big 'T' and little 't'—is a Goliath of its own, and while much of what we'll discuss is both implicitly and explicitly related (if not defiantly so) to the entirely unique and incredibly complex social codes and spatial domestication that theatres enact upon viewers, our aim is to move the conversation outside the confines of such a structure. Even now, many seasoned viewers of performance still struggle with what we like to call a 'Theatre Hangover', or the ways in which viewers assume theatre-based behavior whenever they identify themselves to be within a site of performance. For the purposes of considering how contemporary performance can be curated in contemporary contexts, however, we'll be trying our best to put that hangover to bed.

All of this to say, we believe that to curate performance is to curate the performance of its viewing. The temporal and phenomenological experience of inhabiting a space in which performance occurs is ultimately shaped by the pre-existing codes which directly affect how viewing occurs, or how performing one's viewing is executed. Viewers pre-determinedly understand how to act within various spaces and how to encounter various works by virtue of the curatorial invitations they consciously or unconsciously choose to interact with; where to move and look, when, before and after what, with and for how much time. By choosing how to navigate in/through/around/and out of the given work as well as the frameworks that contain it, the viewer-cum-agent *performs* their viewing; whereas a theatre might conjure passive responses, performance spaces, in this sense, foster active impulses. Curating performance thusly has the power to mirror, translate, and/or displace the pre-established dynamics of power and agency found in the performance of viewing.

Viewing performance in an alternative context, such as a gallery, street or ‘alternative’ site, activates a distinctly different arsenal of social codes enforced by both the construction of the space as well as its temporary inhabitants. As Josette Feral explains, one form of theatricality includes “...a process that has to do with a ‘gaze’ that postulates and creates a distinct, virtual space belonging to the other, [...] framing a quotidian space that [we] do not occupy...” (Feral & Bermingham, 2002, p. 97). In recognizing this space of/as *other*, the viewer’s presence and compliance often engages them in an unwritten and co-dependent contract in which the audience understands and assumes the role of an audience. Ultimately, this is a role that the viewers—which constitute the audience—must undeniably perform.

So, what are the practical implications of the viewer who performs their viewing? Ultimately, a curator of performance must interrogate each and every hypothetical way in which an audience could choose to perform their viewing. Is it useful, for instance, to treat a performance as any other object in the space? Might a curator be able to establish conditions where interactions are explicitly integrated within the gallery-going experience? How might a curator capitalize on the excess and limitations of the pre-existing social codes and spatial domestication found, implicitly, in any given space? Within these frames of consideration, curating performance has the profound potential to destabilize, and potentially displace, these domesticated codes, empowering us to be how we want to be when we see.

Performance as Intervention

When a context becomes interrupted/destabilized/recalibrated by a person or people intervening in a way that disrupts the understanding and experience of that initial context, an intervention has taken place. To illustrate this paradigm, we’ll consider Diane Borsato’s *Falling Piece*, which premiered at the Art Gallery of Ontario¹ and was later remounted at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

In *Falling Piece*, six dancers were hired to dress-up as invited party guests and attend an annual gala that also served as a prominent donor event. Throughout the evening, each dancer independently performed a series of falls in which they literally stumbled or fell down at various points throughout the gallery, typically at the rate of one fall every ten or fifteen minutes over the

course of several hours. Since other attendees were not made aware that the individuals who were falling were a) not guests and b) were instigating/performing their falling, the performers' actions and adherence to the function's dress code camouflaged any perception of performance, resulting in the falls being regarded as genuine physical mishaps.

Supporting the interventional quality of the work was the fact that even though each of the performer's falls were 'staged', each individual's embarrassment was incredibly real. Some attendees assisted those who had fallen up to their feet and offered generous and kind conciliatory encouragement ("*You came in with a bang, honey!*"), while others laughed and snickered. Throughout the evening, and as the cumulative number of falls occurring throughout the gallery increased, some guests began to recognize the 'fallers'. One woman (who had previously assisted a faller to their feet), even pointed at them from across the room and, with a smile, mouthed the words "*You're up to something*". Another guest was overheard remarking that there must be something wrong with the gallery's floors, and that someone should alert the staff.

Unframed Performance

After its exhibition at the Guggenheim², Tino Sehgal's *Kiss* came to the Art Gallery of Ontario for a period of six weeks. In this 'live sculpture', a plain-clothed male and female dancer executed eight minutes of slow motion choreography which included the same physical arrangements of bodies as portrayed in seminal artworks of the same name: Klimt's *Kiss*, Barcuzzi's *Kiss*, Koons' *Kiss*, and Rodin's *Kiss*. This eight minutes of choreography was then repeated non-stop every day and hour the gallery was open by a cast of seven couples who took turns performing the work in three hour shifts.

The work was situated in the middle an extremely large gallery in the contemporary wing, and took place on the cement floor, with absolutely nothing to indicate what it was—no advertisements, promotional photos, signage, or wall vinyl. On average, each couple performed the work for approximately thirty-six hours over the course of the six week exhibition; in front of gaggles of school children, young parents, teenagers, the elderly, and anyone else who happened to walk into the room.

Generally, viewers stood or sat; sometimes for a minute, sometimes for as long as an hour. On several occasions the performers heard visitors reporting to a security guard in an adjacent gallery that two ‘young people’ were ‘having sex’. Another time a condom was tossed at the performers. Some adults attending the gallery with their children would gasp in shock and what sounded like horror as soon as their family happened upon the public display of affection and intimate positioning of bodies in the middle of the gallery. Several toddlers, who were mobile and could speak, asked their accompanying parent “*what are they doing?*” while pointing at the performers. On more than one occasion, the parents ignored the child and their question.

Some viewers got angry. In one instance, a middle-aged woman stormed out of the room yelling “*it’s disgusting*”. In another instance, an elderly woman in a tweed skirt suit stood above the performers, commenting on how physically fit they were and leaning down to stroke the male performer’s hair while commenting on how “*awfully cute*” he was. Some hid in the halls leading to the gallery, peeking their heads around the corner to observe. Some sat cross-legged beside the performers. Some cried. Some spoke to themselves. Some asked questions to the performers, to which they could not, and did not, respond. More frequently than not, viewers asked when it would end.

Participatory Performance

When performance requires participation in order to be activated or sustained, how do you instigate a viewer’s involvement? What cues does a curator imbed and/or frame the work’s presentation with in order facilitate/support a viewer’s immersion into the work, as if they were a performer all along? What motivates interaction and transition from the performance of viewing to the performance of doing?

The Self Love Ball, created by Erin Robinson, Adri Disman, Andréa de Keijzer, and Cara Spooner, took place in a small hotel room in Toronto’s Gladstone Hotel³. The piece grew out of one of the artist’s practices of consoling herself during a period of heartbreak by listening to love songs while dancing, crying, and singing the lyrics back to herself. The idea was to situate the

viewers in a context where they would be obliged to engage in the difficult and important task of loving themselves, and while doing so, to ‘dance like no one was watching’.

When viewers entered the hotel room, they were confronted with a sign of rules, or instructions: ‘dance with yourself, for yourself, and sing the lyrics of the songs back to yourself’. Each viewer was then invited to a ‘baggage check’ where they could write down on a small card something they felt held them back from loving themselves. Each entry was then left in a coat-check closet, and each viewer was informed that they could either choose to collect it at the end of the evening, or leave it there indefinitely. Lastly, each viewer was given a dance card on which every slot was filled with ‘Myself’, ‘Me’, ‘I’, etc. As they proceeded into the space, the artists were on hand to answer any and all questions the attendees had, as well as participate as visual and performative examples of how the work functioned.

What transpired was a self-help dance party, where the intimacy of the space (a small hotel room) prohibited any distance for either an artist or attendee to ‘sit-back’ or ‘watch’; if you were there, you were a part of what was happening. The work ran for twelve hours, and some participants stayed the entire time.

Invisible Performance

With an interest in examining the performativity of audiences, ‘audiencing’, and performing-viewing, both of us created a work⁴ at the stromereien11 Performance Festival in Zürich that endeavored to do just that.

We delivered five hundred paper invitations to residents of a single postal code region around Zürich’s tanz haus, inviting citizens to perform on a certain day during certain time. The invitation requested that the reader ‘perform in any and every way you can’, emphasizing the freedom to broadly interpret the concept of performing. Maybe someone would bring their tuba outside and play, or perform their skills as a parent? The invitation also indicated that an audience would be touring their area on the aforementioned date and time, in the event that they ‘needed’ one.

There were three walking tours/performances of this work, and the audience of Festival goers that attended each one adopted very unique ways of interacting with the task at hand, which was to ‘audience’. The first group was quiet, as if in a gallery, while the second sounded more like a group attending a football game. The third wondered more freely and acted more independently. Some viewers reveled in the opportunity to navigate outdoor spaces they either knew well, or not at all, like they were in living museums. Others viewers just got bored.

Over the course of the three performances, we witnessed many examples of quotidian living that we had, in this context, framed as performance. We watched a cyclist fix his bike chain, and when he rode away every member of the group clapped for him. We stood still in a school yard and watched the patterns made by children running in circles. We saw a lot of homes with their curtains drawn. We walked past a residential garden in which a man was pouring water over his head, in what appeared to some as a self-baptism. We heard a piano being played from an open third story window, and when it stopped, the crowd erupted in applause. Immediately, a slew of residents on each floor of the building stuck their heads out of their windows to see what was going on. When one of them asked “*where’s the performance?*”, we all responded “*you’re the performance!*”. Though the performances we saw may have been ‘futile’—just as our commitment to finding them may have also been futile—our perseverance in searching, locating, and identifying each and every performance that we came across consequently substantiated and reified precisely how we performed our viewing.

¹ Please see this work at <http://dianebersato.net/projects/falling-piece/>

² This work can be viewed at

http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/01/arts/design/01tino.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

³ This work can be viewed at <http://caraspooner.com/Self-Love-Ball>

⁴ This work can be viewed at http://skyfairchildwaller.com/section/251921_8037_2011.html

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Biographies

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22. Curating Performance on the Edge of the Art Museum

Judith Schwarzbart¹

Abstract: Since the *Intermedia* and *Fluxus* movements, a variety of time-based artforms have been contained within visual art contexts. The performative works draw often as much on the tradition of theatre, music, dance, and poetry reading as fine art. Although the institutional context plays a role in establishing the ‘rules of engagement’ these can also be challenged curatorially by the programming, choice of location(s), modes of communication, and a general orchestration in time and space.

The paper presents some reflections from the process of co-curating *ACTS 2014*, a performance and sound art festival organised by Museum of Contemporary Art in Roskilde. Having grown out of a *Fluxus* spirit, the museum is not foreign to time-based practices like many museums are. Nevertheless, the intensive two-day festival offers a format that vary considerable from the exhibition series the museum puts on most of the time. The performance program includes artists such as composers usually working with contemporary music, electronic music composers, as well as performance artists working from performance and conceptual art tradition.

The paper looks at how the temporal program, as a format for presenting performative contemporary (visual) art, differs from the exhibition, and how the temporal program offers different terms for audience engagement with art. Framing and staging include questions of location, durations and status of time frame, types of audience-ship and modes of address. Recognising that curating involves many dimension that go beyond the ‘putting-together’ (Bismarck, Schaffaff & Weski, 2012), the paper addresses how the performance program offers conditions for the artwork (on an ontological level), for audience movement, for the situation and the social conditions, which all differ considerably from that of the exhibition as presentation format.. As many in recent years have pointed out (for example, see Fowle, 2007; Husemann, 2012), reflexivity is at the centre of curation. This includes taking the time to describe, analyse, and discuss curatorial practices in an academic context, which is the aim of this paper.

Curating Performance on the Edge of the Art Museum

From a visual art perspective, contemporary curating has two distinct genealogies: one that grew out of the museum’s care for their collections, and one that emerged from more independent and critical practices—sometimes carried out under other names by people calling themselves exhibition-maker, art critic (who happened to make exhibitions), artist, etcetera (for an example of the latter, see O’Neill, 2012). There is no room, here, to address the differences but just to point out the different emphasis on education and administration of cultural heritage, of the first, and contemporary—and even future—cultural production, of the latter. This could be read as a somewhat schizophrenic situation, but instead we should think of it in terms of a spectrum of various priorities, possible approaches and different types of reflexivity. In overall

terms, there has been a development from primarily a caretaker (of collection) to that of a cultural producer or even a cultural ‘agent’ with all the aesthetics, ethics and politics this position entails. And it is in this capacity that I am addressing curatorial in this presentation.

When it comes to public programming at art museums, we have recent years seen an increase in events such as lectures, seminars, and performances. This is done partly (at least in Europe) to maintain legitimacy for public funding by a still broadening audience reach, but also in order to keep up with the marked logic of the experience economy in selling experiences to ‘cultural consumers’.² In Denmark, this logic has occasionally gone so far that it happens at the expenses of art—racer cars, haute couture, and ostentatious flower bouquets simply were more spectacular than art. The curator has in these cases become a manager of audience experience but they have lost—at least that is my claim—the ‘*what*’, ‘*how*’ and ‘*why*’ that is so central to curation: What to show, how do we show it, and why? And implicitly in these questions, of course: for whom?

This paper looks at how the temporal program of a festival as a format for presenting performative contemporary (visual) art differs from the exhibition format that constitutes the main program of a museum. It is my claim that the temporal program offers different conditions for how audience and art meet and less fixed terms for this engagement.

I take departure in some thoughts specifically related to a festival called *ACTS*, which I co-curate at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Denmark. Since *ACTS* is still in the planning stage, I can only address the project with examples of curatorial reflection and not evaluating the process. I do believe that such issues can be addressed on a more speculative level, and not only on the practical level of messy process and compromises (although that can be interesting too). While some presenters quoted Irit Rogoff’s (2006) definition of the distinction between ‘curating’ and ‘the curatorial’ during the ACAQ Symposium, I am rather taking the Swedish curator Maria Lind’s distinction as a starting point (Lind, 2012). Lind reworks Chantal Mouffe’s (2005) distinction between *politics* and *the Political*, where politics is pragmatic and full of compromises, it is within the political that ideas are radicalised and where differences become clear. The curatorial is where we make different approaches, values, and methodologies come to

the fore. It is here new ideas develop from the clashes between these approaches, and it is at this level change can happen.

Back to *ACTS*: The context is important so I will start with a few words about the Museum. Since opening in 1991, the Museum of Contemporary Art has shown performance alongside visual art objects. In fact, the ground to the museum was prepared already two years before with a *Fluxus* festival called *Festival of Fantastics*, which was (I think) compensating for the lack of archival and collection record of that important art ‘movement’.

Although performance art was not very strong at the local art scene in the early 90s, the broadness of the museum approach proved to be very useful facing the tendencies for more socially orientated practices—sometimes labelled ‘relational aesthetics’ (Bourriaud, 2002)—which developed in the second half of the 90s. Regardless of if you think of performance art (with its specific historical tradition) or the looser concept of performative art (which might as well be object with a performative dimension), a festival or a live programme offers a different frame for art experience than an exhibition.

I would like to address four aspects of the temporal program and compare them with the exhibition:

1) The character (idea) of the artwork:

The temporal program has a special relevance when there is a live element in which an artist or other performers are present, since most often the performers cannot be present during the whole exhibition. Some exhibitions do include scheduled, live events, but often, recorded versions of live events are exhibited as well. These might be framed either as documents of the a live performance or artworks in their own right. Obviously, the live version has a different relationship to the audience than the document: the audience is more internal to the piece, integrated into its realisation. But in exhibitions, such works are often translated into objects or documents of the act. The event is finished, closed the viewer, who is again separate from and external to the event. While an exhibition of objects can be generous in its access (qua less ephemeral than performance), a particular sense of address, a temporary symbiosis with the

audience and more emergent meaning production is lost in the static exhibition—one, that can exist in a live programme.

2) Audience movement:

While in exhibitions the visitors move around according to their own pace and order, individually or in small groups, the temporal program structures time and movement more—although relatively less than a theatrical situation. It is this orchestrated time and space that creates that temporary community, which we call an audience (compared to what we in exhibition tend to call the beholder). Regular museum guests are used to the freedom of movement and are less obliged to remain in their place (their seats) than most theatregoers. Therefore, it works well to place different performances and events in different spaces and locations in and around the museum. However, it also means a curatorial challenge to communicate, directly or indirectly, frame psychological and temporal shifts in the program, so that the audience for instance does not give up too soon on a slow pace, or feel they are missing out on something more interesting somewhere else.

3) Specific situations:

When we curate exhibitions, we often think in terms of contextualising works. The temporal program offers the chance to work with the different locations and their implicit social codes. Take for instance ACTS 2014: here, we use the exhibition galleries, some adjacent spaces indoor and outdoor, a local music venue (mainly for a staged program), and urban space. These spaces already have a community, social codes, and specific ways to engage with what happens there. But when programming these spaces, we also intervene in these existing structures and potentially briefly change them.

4) The social

While the exhibition, in its still prevalent high modernist form, has a strong individual mode of address, the temporal programme—as the performative arts in general—has a more social outset. That is one that fits well with a lot of contemporary art. But not only do the artworks or the artists approach the audience as already existing community, it also generates particular communities, particular forms of sociality, and specific moments of encounter.

Two examples:

For the sake of the argument, I have chosen some more politically direct projects, which in that concern are not representative for the program as a whole.

Example 1: Andrea Geyer's *Comrades of time*

In *Comrades of time*, seven women in turn recite monologues composed from speeches, letters, and essays by architects, writers, philosophers and political organizers from the era of the Weimar Republic. With looming extremist forces slowly forming, intellectuals of the young republic tried to mobilize people by appealing to the capacities of their minds, and their responsibility to the community. As I see it, this work is not only about getting an experience of historical times but also about transferring the capacity of a political imaginary to the present time, where this is nearly non-existing.

This work also exists as a video installation. The manuscripts are carefully worked out to be both intriguing and emotional. However, when it comes to actualizing ideas in the present, the performance might benefit from leaving the aesthetically sanctioned space of the gallery or the stage. Therefore, we are setting up this performance in a large aula at the local public library. By combining the audience from the festival with the library users, we hope to generate a social situation that matches the character of the work, thereby balancing the personal desire to listen with the collective thinking about the future of our society.

Example 2: Bonnie Fortune and Brett Bloom's *The Powerless PowerPoint: "A is for Anthropocene"*

The Powerless PowerPoint: "A is for Anthropocene" is a mobile slide presentation, which is designed to be shown in public spaces. In this performance, the artists plan to carry their 'slides' through the streets of the city center as a kind of exhibition becoming performance, playing with the collapsed borders between propaganda, commercials, management type communication and street theatre—and yet extremely low-tech. In this work, Fortune and Bloom have replaced the ubiquitous PowerPoint presentation with an electricity free presentation system. Talking about their sources of inspiration to the work, the artists quote among others

Tom Bender's book *The Environmental Design Primer* (1976): "We seek a lower standard of living for a higher quality of life" (Bender, in Bloom & Fortune, 2006, p. 10). With visual and textual means, Fortune and Bloom seek to engage with the ways in which human society effects the surrounding environment. They are interested in what it means to start powering down, using and consuming less, all while continuing to make compelling visual culture. Thus, this work is not just eager for an audience (in artistic sense of that term) but for a public (in its democratic sense). It is a moment of public address that acts as it talks.

Both *Comrades of time* and *The Powerless PowerPoint: "A is for Anthropocene"* propose clear ideas in regards to forms of address, which differ somehow from the conventions of the museum. While the first performance is scripted, the second has a more open format, and thus more open to interventions. By changing the context, however, they change not only the potential audience, but also the fixed habits or conventions of how to watch performance. As such, the artists open the situation towards a more unpredictable reception, leaving it more the public to decide to join and how.

Conclusion:

The temporal program offers a radically different audience encounter than the traditional one-to-one of the exhibition. Rather than a defining logic of the collection, the temporal program encourages and emphasises already existing performative qualities of contemporary works and strengthens the works' connectedness to social life in general. It also offers less defined ways for the audience to engage (or not) with the works, thus opening for an on-going renegotiation of the relationship between work and audience, or art and society.

¹ The initial abstract to this paper was written together with my colleague and co-curator, Sanne Krogh Groth, and this paper owes a lot to our initial conversations.

² This is my observation, but it is shared by many, such as Larsen (2009) and Harvie (2012).

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Brett Bloom & Bonnie Fortune:

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Andrea Geyer: <http://andreageyer.info>

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23. The city, the community, the contemporaneity. 'Malta – the Idioms' as a proposal for a programme strategy of a festival of applied ideas

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Abstract: A critical case study of a programme strategy, which was applied to Malta Festival Poznań five years ago, and marked a condition for an identity shift of the whole event. Taking my professional experience as Malta's programmer as a starting point, this paper touches some crucial and problematic moments of the reflection on the festivals which carry a complex sense of meaning deeply-seated in the contemporary world.



Let me start with an image, one of many which depict the last edition of Malta Festival Poznań and which captured a particular moment of millions that this three week long event consisted of. At the first glance it is just a picture, random photo documentary of a concert. Yet it might evoke many possible interpretations on different levels. This photo might be seen as an image of relation between artist (an American singer Jessie Evans) and spectators who are taking positions towards her scenic presence. It might be also a grasped moment of sudden, fragile and undefined state of communication. It might be seen as a pleasant, colourful picture that carries a weight of political correctness, or a helpful PR stand, a sentimental image released to illustrate a situation of a tolerance, equality. Another possible interpretation is that one can identify him or

her self within this image as somebody who stays outside its frames, and conduct private reconstruction of this hot, summer evening, standing next to a tiny stage on a square in one of Central-European cities.

This single, seemingly neutral snapshot, presented here out of context, is troublesome. What I want to highlight is that it could be at the same time a social advertisement, a tool for aestheticized soft power, a photomontage or just an individual affective recollection. And somehow its multi-layer presence is a pictorial parallel that comes across the reference to the current role of the festivals and their shape—in the regards to the notion of the community, contemporaneity and public space—the notion of the city itself.

If somebody would ask about distinctive features of a festival, the possible answers might include such words as: celebration, community, and surprise. One could add that the festival is the feast of the arts and an affirmative process of bringing it to the audience. However hard it is to deny such answers, I argue that they cover only a part of a festival experience, and need to be expanded upon. I'd like to offer a vehicle for such investigations and share an experience of programming the Idioms. What are the Idioms? It is a name of a way of programming Malta Festival: a way which triggered a decision to transforming the thinking about the festival to make it gravitate more towards outside world, and less towards and inside celebration of the festival itself.

The Idioms were born in 2009 within the structure of Malta Festival Poznań, which at that time was a festival of performance arts with an almost twenty-year-long tradition. In the beginning, in 1991, its programme was in line with social and political changes occurring in Poland after the fall of Communism in 1989 and the new era of freedom. Malta stemmed from this energy—a common sense of changes, reconstruction of social relationships, democracy and opening to the world. With time, it has become one of the most important summer cultural events in Poland, and a festival of street theatre that gained recognition in Europe.

After several years—although the development was visible in the growing number of performances and viewers—Malta entered a phase of identity crisis. The reasons that lead to such situation were various, but above all it was caused by losing touch with the outside world. At that time, the programming strategy was dispersed: it focused partly on satisfying the

audience, partly on meeting the expectations expressed by 'the spectators' (which were rather a hypothetical figures or representatives of authorities, than a specific audience members) regarding Malta, a festival which had been identified since its beginning with the city (Poznań), and somehow 'belonging' to it.

Thus, this breaking down of the festival's the sense of 'identity' and the possible scenarios for future was expressed internally, within the festival's team, after almost twenty years of existence. There was, at this turning point, a necessity to reformulate the philosophy and programme principles of the festival and to revise the way the festival was defined in relation to artists and audience. As a result of this inner reflection, a clear change in the programme took place in 2009 and manifested for the first time in 2010. The Idioms were an attempt to capture the dynamic changes of the world and performing arts. They grew out of the conviction that a festival is an event in the life of a city and its residents, and should bring closer not only what is spectacular, but also significant.

In this respect, the basic inspiration for the Idioms-turn was our perception of the outside world. On one hand, this world is experienced on a daily basis through the reception of images, information, and ideas, which are overload with meaningless, poor quality content that very often pretend to be art, but which in fact only serve as entertainment, offering superficial access to meaning. On the other hand, the reality around us is based on a feeling of instability and threat, and constructed of superficial, easily consumed content. In such a perspective, the Idioms seek to define what is *common* once again by creating an engaging space and removing the alienating chasm between what is public and private, indifferent and egoistic, and entertainment and elitism.

The logic or leading themes of the Idioms set the narration of every edition of the festival, and is dedicated to different cultures or socio-cultural phenomena. Every year, a specific topic is analysed, and a curator is asked to create a multi-disciplinary territory where contemplation, critical thinking, wonder, and indignation are allowed. The key goal is to identify the topics that carry a similar intensive energy, a potential of transgression, revolt and change, reaching a broader audience through events and challenging artistic encounters. So far, programmers and artists have dealt with themes such as: *Flanders* (2010), *Excluded* (2011), *Asian Investments* (2012), *Oh man, oh machine* (2013), and *Latin America: Mestizos* (2014).

The strategy for proposing topics that could be elaborated by a curator is conditioned by searching for new possible ways of defining a contemporary condition of theatre that is suspended between three words: actor–audience–society. This issue is very important, especially in the context of the festival, which on the one hand should take the responsibility for the audience—by inviting into true dialogue, offering much more than just high quality programme or ambitious entertainment—, and on the other, should introduce new theatrical languages (idioms) and uncover new areas of experimentation. The basic assumption is that theatre from its roots has provided the space for conflict, *agon*, that allows a confrontation with the unknown, and serves as a laboratory for risky encounter. But, above all, it depends on people and cannot last without them: the actors and spectators.

However, as a magnifying glass for the current condition of the world and the present time, the Idioms set a guideline for the whole festival. Malta is not purely 'experimental' or 'artistic' event. It merges different kinds of projects and artistic languages, in order to provide the audience with different modes of access to the meaning. Looking over the programme of last (2013) edition of Malta—in which Idiom part was called 'Oh man, oh machine' and programmed by Romeo Castellucci—, one will find a wide spectrum of projects, such as: an underground, dark performance by Simon Vincenzi presented in shabby hall of 19th century abandoned slaughter house; a hi-tech performance by Gisèle Vienne; a modest 20-minute dance solo by twenty-two year old Japanese dancer Mikiko Kawamura; a spectacular open air concert by the legendary group Kraftwerk; and, a workshop for children where they could build musical instruments from recycled garbage. This short extract from a programme that consisted of over one hundred presentations shows a way of understanding the term 'applying ideas', which I put in a title of this text. The idea is to incorporate within the entire structure of the festival the idea of being involved in the contemporary world, employing strategies, modes of communication, and presentations that allow the audience to get closer to the idea and take part in discussion. This involvement might happen in different ways, such as as taking part in a big gig or participating in philosophical discussions with a few people.

When using the phrase 'festival of applied ideas', I should add that the term is clearly inspired by an idea proposed by Andrzej Wirth—a Polish origin theatre personality—who in 1982 created in an exceptional space within the structure of the Justus Liebig University in Giessen. He called this space *Angewandte Theaterwissenschaft / Institute for Applied Theatre Studies*, aiming to gather under one umbrella a number of important perspectives on the making, understanding, and analysing of theatre (drama, media and staging practice). In 1998, Wirth (2002) confessed: “I was dreaming about praxeologic approach in theatrology” (p. 42) referring to the concept of 'praxeology' raised in the 1950s by Polish analytical philosopher Tadeusz Kotarbiński (1955), who called for considering all human activities by respecting their purposes, and clearly defining goals that are based on practical experience: the efficiency of action, if is limited to the facts intended as targets, is nothing else like the purposefulness of action, so that these terms can be used interchangeably in the application of the measures considered for the purposes (p. 106). For over thirty years, this Institute educated and shaped many artists, including She She Pop, Réne Pollesh, Rimini Protokoll, and Gob Squad. Today, the school is flourishing under the programming direction of Heiner Goebbels, and remains one of most renowned and influential centres in Germany for the reflection on performing art. Thanks to the tradition of merging theory and practice, it is now hardly to imagine a festival that could initiate a dialogue about contemporaneity without reflecting on parallels or commonalities between science and art.

The experience of the Idioms is heavily inspired by the context of applying ideas into practice. However, they serve as a backbone of a certain kind of 'philosophy' of the festival, which—by introducing new artistic languages (idioms) and aesthetics—opens an access to zone of a risk or confrontation of challenges. The Idioms do not avoid interacting with daily, practical, and sometimes even ordinary experience and put ideas to the test by using the common sense of the audience. In such practice, the programme strategy of Malta is a mixture composed of both internal and external discourses.

At this point, I would like to raise a question about the condition of the audience itself, because as programmers, curators, and researchers, we are quite often faced with a dilemma: how do we find right questions to ask the audience, and which questions or doubts would we

want to address through this bilateral dialogue? In other words: how do we make programming practice relevant? My hypothesis is that the festival might play a crucial role in this discussion as a creator and re-creator of public debate. We can take on our curatorial responsibility by highlighting social and political context of artistic work, showing relevant links that bridge artistic searching with local discourses (also hidden and marginalised), and taking into account the need to define a model of meeting with the spectators and their intellectual and emotional engagement.

Through the example of a picture of Jessie Evans' concert, I wanted to underline a tricky situation of programming, and whatever we do it in the frame of a festival, repertory theatre, or anything else. Being suspended between our own desire and imagination, marketing machine and matrix of others expectations, we are sometimes inclined to make simplifications and think in opposites: 'mainstream' vs. 'experimental', pop vs. 'high-culture', 'established' vs. 'unknown', 'festival goer' vs. 'amateur'. Perhaps the only strategy to resist and avoid being the victim of resentment is putting our trust in personal intuition, not hiding it under the 'objective' narration—which is never true.

So how we could define the convincing programme strategy and why do we do what we do? My answer might sound naïve: we are able to establish an honest relationship with the outside world—the community of spectators—as long as we are not focused on our own uniqueness and don't treat our festival as a product (although we are all elements of the logic of commodity flow). Thus, I argue that the only way to keep the festival a true, living structure—that is both reactive and watchful towards contemporaneity—is to guard our own subjectivity and fight against transforming ourselves into a product, brand or fortress that isolates itself by staying in only one context as a 'successful event'. Therefore, I would like to propose that we revise our dictionaries and include into them some words of different origins, such as: 'mode of being', 'spectatorship', 'affective encounter', 'risk', 'subjectivity', 'dream', 'failure', 'love', 'dread', 'immersion', and 'trust'. A Festival has a paradoxical identity: it is idiosyncratic, individual, and somehow beyond time and space, but also serves as a very fragile sensor of current *Zeitgeist*. The notion of time is visible yet in a basic word identifying the festival. It is always 'an event'. The

festival lives its own life, so that it has a continuation (or not) and consequences (or not); it might leave a trace in one's mind and feed one's soul. Or not.

Hans Ulrich Obrist (2011), in conversation with Enrique Walker, speaks about the meaning of silence and its ambivalence. Pointing out the problematic distinction between a conversation and an exchange that leads to the ultimate point of helplessness in communication, he claims that: "There are things we cannot transcribe" (p. 19). I think that this statement—whether in agreeing to or opposing it—might serve as a useful metaphor of applied curatorial practice nowadays. Both 'silence' as a lack of words, and 'void' as a ravaged, 'speechless' space, are territories of a critical curatorial practice that make an attempt to reflect upon matters lying on the margins of themes. The Idioms are programmed with a certain motivation: to depict 'unspoken' and 'unseen' not by illustrate them in a tautological manner, but rather to open the access to these zones and evoke an affective dialogue within the audience.

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Biography:

Katarzyna Tórz (b. 1982) Warsaw University Philosophy graduate. Since 2012 has been a student of Post-Graduate Studies at The Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences where she is working at her thesis concerning post-human approaches in contemporary performing art and its relation with terror. Since 2008 has been programmer of Malta Festival Poznań.

24. “Curatorial Approaches to Site Specific Performance, Action and Participatory Intervention in the Public Realm”

Beyond Commemoration - “Hit and Run” at the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin.

Dovrat Meron (Allemagne/Germany, Israël/Israel)

The following paper is a summary of my practice-based Master’s research from 2012-2013, *Curatorial Approaches to Site Specific Performance, Action and Intervention in the Public Realm*, which deals with the discursive field of curatorial practice of site specific performances action and participatory intervention in the public realm. In 2011, parallel to my research, a German Neo-Nazi underground terrorist group known as the Zwickauer Zelle (named after their town, Zwickau) was uncovered. With this in mind, I took it on myself with *Beyond Commemoration* to critically question the commemoration culture in Germany and how the Holocaust needs still to be remembered in Germany today!

For the practical part of this study, I curated art projects at the Holocaust Memorial for the murdered Jews in Berlin. I invited Israeli artist and performer Moran Sanderovich, German performer and producer Birgit Auf der Lauer, and Argentinian artist, curator and producer Valeria Schwarz to develop projects at the Memorial: the result was a night guided tour, a performance and intervention entitled *Beyond Commemoration*.

The Holocaust Memorial is a public space built on a private area belonging to the German government and managed by the Holocaust Memorial Foundation. This makes it one of many in-between public/private spaces. Art projects of any kind are forbidden and any request for permits to take photos or video in the memorial for future public screening is doomed to be rejected as part of the policy of the memorial foundation. Due to this strict position, I applied the *Hit and run* curatorial approach, which is often used for socio-political art interventions with critical intentions that are carried out in sensitive urban places. My Master’s presentation, which was open to the public, took place at the *Organ of Critical Art - OKK* space in September 2012. *Beyond Commemoration* also took place at the Month of Performance Art Berlin 2013.

Curatorial Approaches to Site Specific Performance, Action and Participatory Intervention in the Public Realm

“I have no more questions about gallery walls” (Bordowitz, in Crimp, 1989, p. 8)

Performance, which is as elusive and ephemeral in its live context as it is on the Internet, must be located somewhere. The correlation between the artist and the place or location stands in the centre of this genre. The curatorial practice and approach to site-specific performance working methods are unique to each and every project/event/exhibition, according to the curator, artists, locations, working frame and conditions. One of the most meaningful influences that site specific performance had on the art market is dematerialization: creating and presenting work outside of gallery spaces can be understood as a criticism on art institutions and the commercialisation of art.

There are curators who choose to work in the performance and site-specific field deliberately, in order to criticize product oriented commercial art, with the hope to balance the art market with process-based events. Few, however, find alternative ways of producing ephemeral performances.

Beyond Commemoration: “Hit and Run” at the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin.

The Holocaust is a sensitive topic. As an Israeli and a ‘third generation’ Jew to Holocaust survivors, I consider Holocaust memorials and concentration camps, as charged zones. In that sense, choosing to curate a performance event at the Holocaust Memorial was a challenging decision, full of unexpected traps on the one hand but rewarding on the other. I will begin by providing a detailed introduction to the Holocaust Memorial. This information is crucial to understand the context and circumstances that the location dictated and the influence it had on our work and on the performances.

The Holocaust Memorial in Berlin

The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe is located in the heart of Berlin between Brandenburger gate and Potsdamer Platz. It was designed by American architect Peter Eisenman and sculptor Richard Serra (who later withdrew from the project). It is the most important

memorial of the Holocaust in Europe. Below the memorial, there is an underground information centre; both are managed by the foundation for the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. (*Die Stiftung Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas*) The Memorial is a column field consisting of 2,711 concrete slabs, also named stelae, which are spread out over five acres in a sloping maze in memory of the six million Jews killed during Germany's attempt to exterminate the ethnic Jewish minority during World War II.

Interesting debate took place around the Memorial, which forced politicians and opinion-makers to reflect on how Germany can best remember and commemorate the Holocaust. One of the main criticisms against the Memorial is that it does not invite to any discourse nor promote action to arise on the culture of memory. Eisenman's intention was to create irritation: he used tilted stelae in different heights and a sloped ground so that people who enter the maze do not immediately realize that the ground is inclined, but only when walking further and deeper in-between the column which gradually gets arbitrarily higher. The pathways in the Memorial are narrow in order to prevent people from walking side by side or in groups, so that at a time when the memorial is crowded with visitors one might even get lost in the maze. In this way, Eisenman hoped to arouse sensations and feelings that echo with the rationality—or irrationality—of the Nazi regime. Finally, Eisenman wanted to provoke a feeling of being left alone, small and hopeless.

In 1997, graffiti on the temporary fencing of the construction site of the memorial declared '*The debate is the memorial!*'

[I]t is, paradoxically, a 'reverse embodiment inasmuch as the slogan would now read: '*The memorial is the debate*'. In other words, the sentiment expressed by the graffiti of keeping the debate alive, fluid and public has ended up being enshrined in Eisenman's design in defiance of the graffiti's obvious fear that no memorial site would be able to do this. (Whybrow, 2011 p. 147).

This position was stated by the influential 'memorial guru' James E. Young, who recognised in the early stages of the debate that a physical memorial threatened remembrance, and therefore should not be erected in the first place. Young commented on Pierre Nora's argument that, "The less memory is experienced from the inside, the more it exists through its exterior scaffolding and outward signs" (Nora, 1989, p. 13) and pointed out that "if the obverse of this is true as well, than perhaps the more memory comes to rest in its exteriorized forms, the less it is experienced

internally” (Young, 1993, p. 5). Here, Young suggests that since memorials are so stable and massive, they create the illusion that they are there forever, thus almost allowing us to forget that they exist, and why. He explains,

In this age of mass memory production and consumption, in fact there seem to be an inverse proportion between the memorialization of the past and its contemplation and study. For once we assign monumental form to memory, we have to some degree divested ourselves to the obligation to remember. In shouldering the memory work, monuments may relieve viewers of their memory burden...The memorial operation remained self-contained and detached from our daily lives to the extent that we encourage monuments to do our memory-work for us, we became that much more forgetful. (Young, 1993, p. 5)

Hit and run intervention as curatorial approach

Hit and run is a term used to describe a situation when a car driver accidentally hits a pedestrian, but flees the site of the crime instead of stopping the car, driving the injured person to the hospital and taking the responsibility for the accident. When using this term in the context of a site-specific curatorial approach, it refers to performance events or self-organised interventions with socio-political critical intentions. According to Friedrich von Borries, Christian Hiller, Daniel Kerber, Friederike Wegner and Anna-Lena Wenzel: “Curatorial interventions are not yet an extensively theorized or historised topic. We might say it engages exhibitionary histories with hope of transforming the ways displays are produced and the ways audiences related to them” (2012, p. 135). Curating *Hit and run* is usually not a choice among others, but the only way to be able to create in certain areas in the city where criticism is not wanted and art works are not permitted. A priority is given to the place and its charged socio-political implications.

Hit and run as a curatorial approach is already a statement that locates the event in a kind of anarchist and critical context. Many *Hit and run* projects are taking place in sensitive urban areas without legal permits, and might be stopped by the authorities and the police at any given moment. As such, in many cases, they must be realized quickly. This influences their aesthetic, which means using materials that can be either easily dismantled and spirited away quickly, or which can stay at the place of the action and be destroyed or confiscated by the police.

Beyond Commemoration: The Artists and Their Projects

Many find the Holocaust Memorial too abstract, and feel that it refrains from either taking a precise position as memorial (*Mahnmal*) that would warn the German people from repeating the Holocaust, or a monument (*Denkmal*) to commemorate the victims and to comfort the Holocaust survivors. This distinction seemed to play a very big role in its reception and the critiques on it. And it is this formal and functional distinction that is so problematic.

Many visitors to the memorial complain about the loose rules at the site. For example, people are allowed to sit on the stelae, or engage in activities such as playing hide and seek, shouting and laughing. Flexible rules that are sometimes ignored or intentionally violated are very natural for an *in-between* private open public memorial. It invites everyone to enter it in any time and offers a physical sensation but does not connote immediately to the Holocaust. The memorial succeeds in commemorating the Holocaust and promotes remembrance only if the people who visit it come with the *intention* to remember and commemorate. Entering it with playful or negative approach is also a way to remember. During the time I spent at the memorial I met people who did not know that this is a memorial for the Jews murdered in the Holocaust. Indeed, fewer than 50% of the visitors enter the stela field to its depth, and even fewer visit the information centre which links the abstract sculpture to the crimes of the Nazis. A study conducted by Die Denkmal Stiftung estimates that only twelve percent of the memorial visitors go underground to the information center (Stiftung Denkmal, n.d.), meaning that only small percent of the visitors receive full information and learn about the history of the Holocaust thoroughly. As such, in my opinion, the memorial fails in fulfilling its duty.

Valeria Schwarz (born in Argentina) is a Berlin-based independent curator, artist and cultural manager. I invited her to participate in *Beyond Commemoration* due to her rich experience in intervention work in public space. With her work *small questions for large places* (*kleine Fragen für große Ort*), Schwarz explores the boundaries between the terms monument (Denkmal) and memorial (Mahnmal). She raises the visitor's awareness to the conventions and behavioural codes the memorial evokes. For *small questions to large places*, Valeria Schwarz was working with the actor and performer Maik Kerner (born in Germany). As a kind of guardian of site-specific consciousness and in a very respectful friendly way he asks the visitors

for their opinion about the rules of the Memorial, while discussing with them whether their behaviour within this semi-public place is appropriate to the place or not. Her inquiry regarding the rules in the Memorial and the presence of guards was an actual issue throughout the whole project, emphasizing the public/private in-betweenness of the memorial. It is merely a speculation that her choice in selecting German performer influenced the reaction of the public and their answers, especially the German visitors. Maik Kerner spoke German with German speakers and English with international tourists, though people seemed to be confused when he first approached them with such direct questions, but then most of the people accepted the challenge and were surprisingly open in sharing their feelings and sensations at the memorial. No doubt that engaging an American, Iranian or Israeli performer would have resulted absolutely different answers and the guards' inquiry might have been interpreted as criticism.

Moran Sanderovich (born in Israel) is a visual artist and performer. I invited Moran to adapt *Insight Skin* (2008), a performance that she created in Jerusalem and performed in conventional stage setups. *Insight Skin* deals with repressed memories that shape and transform the body and with the trauma of the body inherited by her parents and Israeli society, trying to peel off her painful past and realizing that what she holds for a past is her present. During the performance, she wears a sort of a mutation-like silicon costume that disfigures her body and transforms it into a creature-like mutation or an alien. Throughout the performance, she struggles with the costume. The fact that up to this point she performed this piece mostly in theatre and gallery spaces added to her performance at the memorial a sense of fragility. The visitors' reactions to her performance were very diverse. A group of Israeli tourists showed interest in the intentions behind the metaphor. Some people followed her breathless while others were horrified or disgusted. One woman complained about dishonouring the memorial.

Performer-producer and actionist **Birgit Auf der Lauer** (born in Romania) used mapping as a main working method for her performance *Erinnerung² / commemoration²*. Birgit spent a day (June 17, 2012) in the memorial collecting impressions and talking with people. Based on her observations of the architectonic structure, the collective memory of the Holocaust, visitors' impressions and stories from her imagination, she wrote a text and used it as script for a guided night tour. The strength of her piece was based on her unique talent to interpret the research

material and historical facts, mapping and interviews, and turn it into a poetic text that merged the functionality of the Memorial and its so called everyday routine with her individual experience at the Memorial. As we predicted, Birgit Auf der Lauer and Valeria Schwarz's performances raised some interest from the guards but were not interrupted. However, Moran's performance and bizarre mutation costume promptly raised the attention of the guards, who asked us to immediately leave the area of the memorial. The guards who were employed by the *Securitas* security company noticed the actions and reacted to each project differently. For example, in the case of Birgit Auf der Lauer's night tour, while we were filming two guards approached us to ask what we were doing, and if we had permits to film. I answered that we were students: it was an exercise for school and we had no clue that a permit was needed. The guards then asked if we intended to have a public screening, and we responded that it was only for our video course at the art school.

Valeria Schwarz's intervention was the most simple of the three, because it was announced that the intervention would take place all over the staley field and that the public should search for it. By not indicating a specific place in the memorial where spectators should meet, the public was scattered all over the area of the memorial site (instead of being gathered in one spot, which could have raised the guards' attention). The performer, Maik Kerner, was dressed in a suit similar to that of the guards, but he engaged in conversation with the visitors of the memorial. His action did not interfere with the daily routine of the memorial and he even spoke to one of the guards, posing questions about his work as a guard.

The most difficult performance to realize was Moran Sanderovich's. Her costume drew the guards' attention immediately. I argued with the guards that we had permits for the action to gain more time, but we were finally forced to leave the memorial after twenty minutes.

The Impact of Site Specific Performance

Site specific performance in the public realm, and intervention in particular, tends to raise discourse. Site specific interventions that are produced, published, archived and disseminated through educational programs are not evaluated according to the number of the 'likes' or 'tweets' they generate online, but rather in the way that they are received by the public during the

performance and in the way it is processed in the art discourse. This mechanism does not necessarily have more impact—meaning that the artists are more exposed or their piece receives better attention—, but rather it creates a *different kind* of attention within already existing discourses within the field of urbanism, art intervention and performance in the public realm. The potentiality of the performance and interventions that were part of this project was to enable the visitors to experience the Holocaust Memorial in a different way, and to question the memorial culture in Germany. Ultimately, the aim of this project was to inspire action within art context, rather than simply producing academic discourses surrounding the Holocaust.

Ostensibly, one might think that the Internet could enable independent site-specific performance to reach new audiences, independent from art institutional such as galleries and museums. However, even though marginal art projects tends to receive much exposure and attention online, the power of projects being realized outside of the art system is in the fact that they do not ask for legitimacy, entitlement or recognition. Indeed, just the opposite, their craft is in their marginality, which is parallel and many times beyond the art field discourse.



Photo 1 and 2: Moran Sanderovich performing *Insight Skin* (July 2012)

© Paul Holdsworth & Daniela del Pomar



Photo 3: Moran Sanderovich forced to leave the Holocaust Memorial

© Paul Holdsworth & Daniela del Pomar



Photos 4 and 5: Maik Kerner as one of the Holocaust Memorial guards in *Small questions to large places* by Valeria Schwarz © Paul Holdsworth & Daniela del Pomar



Photo 6 and 7: *Erinnerung²* by Birgit Auf der Lauer © Paul Holdsworth & Daniela del Pomar

With *Beyond Commemoration*, my aim was to create a significant discourse around the complexity of the location. As such, contrary to the spirit of *Hit and Run* interventions, we carried out *Beyond Commemoration* for the second time as part of the Month of Performance Art

Berlin in May 2013. Due to the subversive character of the project, Moran Sanderovich performed her piece *Insight skin* on the stripe between the sidewalk and the memorial so the police would not have a case for arrests. An exhibition of photo and video documentation of the pieces, interviews with the artists, and an artist talk and roundtable discussion with the philosopher and author Dr. Ana Maria Rabe took place at the *Organ of Critical Art - OKK* space part of the long weekend of galleries in Berlin.

Documentation of Hit and run

Organizers of *Hit and Run* performances use blogs and Internet social platforms such as Facebook to spread the word and announce the locations and time of the action, but most of the projects avoid posting announcement and documentation on the web as part of their criticism. In some cases, the events are not advertised beforehand and external audiences are not formally invited, in order to avoid drawing a large crowd—and thus attention—to the location in order to prevent the police from coming and interrupting the action. In some cases, however, direct confrontation with the authorities or interference by the police is desirable, as it creates a direct reaction to the act. This is especially if a project aims to put in question issues such as privatization of the public realm, or the power relations between civil and police in public urban spaces. Many *Hit and Run* projects are immediate and do not involve any production apparatus (for example, a flash mob).

Working without official, legal permission highlights the criticality of the performance or the action. In some cases, documentation is not only disturbing to the immediacy of the action but it could also incriminate the artists/performers/part takers, and be used against them in cases when they are caught. This could lead to their arrest and conviction. On the other hand, the presence of cameras or pointed mobile phones can influence the way that the police react to the illegal action. In many cases, it prevents violent reaction from the side of the police, or at least softens the immediate repression methods that are often used in demonstrations.

Another aspect of documentation of such process-based art projects that the artistic quality of such documents is often very poor. That does not apply to the value of the remaining texts, photos and videos, but it puts in question the value of exhibiting them in the context of art

exhibition in galleries or museums. Moreover, one must ask if it does them injustice to place them in the artistic order and evaluate them in artistic context using art critic vocabulary.

In her book *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, Claire Bishops (2012) deals with this complexity:

This emphasis on process over product-or, perhaps more accurately, on process as product – is justified on the straight forwards basis of inverting capitalism’s predilection for the contrary. Consensual collaboration is valued over artistic mastery and individualism, regardless of what the project sets out to do or actually achieves. (p. 29)

She adds, “Participatory art demands that we find new ways of analysing art that are no longer linked solely to visibility, even though form remains a crucial vessel for communicating meaning” (p. 7).



Photo 8: Moran Sanderovich performs *Insight Skin* on the stripe between the Holocaust Memorial and the pavement © Pablo Hermann

Concluding Reflection

As much as I find Eisenman's Holocaust Memorial impressive and aesthetic, and adore his courage to invite people to an immersive experience, it is an invitation that only few dare to accept. Most of the visitors do not trust themselves to enter the maze to its deeper centre. In my opinion, the memorial is abstract and is not historically accurate.

I suspect that if the monument had fulfilled these goals, it would have drawn fewer visitors. The Holocaust Memorial serves as a statement, declaring that Germany officially commemorates and remembers the Holocaust. In a sense, this memorial is not only for Germans and Jews, but also (or maybe even mostly) for international visitors. Indeed, Dr. Irit Dekel (2013) recognizes the:

... precariousness and variation of memory work done at the memorial through the ways visitors engage with the act of remembrance rather than with its object, namely the history of Jewish persecution and the Holocaust. This engagement explores how visitors present and perform their 'moral career' at the site, whose codes have been shaped by knowledge about and visits in this and other sites of Holocaust remembrance. (Dekel, 2013)

Art can't eradicate racism but it can open people's eyes, and show them what 2,711 concrete slabs of impressive, fancy and photogenic memorial can't hide, which is the crimes of Neo-nazis against immigrants (also non-Jews) today. Despite the great effort invested in erecting the Holocaust Memorial, what eventually reminds people of the Holocaust is the cases such as the Zwikauer Neo-Nazi organisation. It is the anti-Semitic slogans used in demonstrations criticising the brutal operations of the Israeli military in Gaza. It is not only up to the places, spaces and locations to commemorate events such as the Holocaust. Commemoration is not passive: it is an individual and collective work that requires awareness and a will to actively remember. And through *Hit and Run* performances such as *Beyond Commemoration*, I believe that we can create alternative, politically, historically, and socially charged ways to commemorate the Holocaust in the here and now, reminding us of the suffering of the Jewish people of Europe in a way that a concrete memorial cannot.

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Acknowledgments

I wish to thank Birgit Auf der Lauer, Valeria Schwarz, Moran Sanderovich and Maik Kerner for their explorative demanding attitude and hard work, for their courage to take risks and for their trust. To Paul Holdsworth and Daniela Garcia del Pomar and Catalina Fernández and Ruth Zuntz for their professional documentation, creative solutions and sensitivity. Deep appreciation to Pablo Hermann and Juan Pablo Díaz from OKK raum 29 for the support and courage to host the exhibition. To Maren Strack, Frederic Schröder and Dr. Nina Möntmann for their support and challenging questions. Special thanks to Dr. Ana Maria Rabe for her wise guidance, precise observations, remarks and corrections. Without her engagement and devotion this project would not be realized. Special thanks to Michal Meron and Alon Baker for their corrections and reflections. To all of them for their engagement, patience and sensitivity. Finally, thanks to Dena Davida and Jane Gabriels for inviting me to the symposium, and for their support throughout this process, and to Helen Simard for her help in editing, shaprening and crystalizing this paper.

Photos 1-7 by Paul Holdsworth and Daniela Garcia del Pomar

Photos 8 by Pablo Hermann

Links to *Beyond Commemoration*:

http://www.dovratmeron.de/beyond_commemoration.html

<http://www.mpa-b.org/dovrat-meron.html>

For the Video Documentation please contact: dovratmeron@gmail.com

Participating Artists' websites:

www.valeriaschwarz.com

www.moran.sanderovich.com

www.varsityofmaneuvers.org

www.paulanddaniela.com

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Biography

Dovrat Meron is co-founder of the ScalaMata exhibition space in Venice (2006-2009). Initiator of *Untranslatable Words Network*, and associate member of Association for performance Art in Berlin. Co-curator of Month of Performance Berlin and Brooklyn International Performance Art Festival. Theatre and performance (BA), Space Strategies, Art in public spaces (MA) and Art and Cultural Project Management. www.dovratmeron.com [dovratmeron.wordpress](http://dovratmeron.wordpress.com)

25. Curation as a form of artistic practice:

Context as a new work through UK-based Forest Fringe

Deborah Pearson, PhD candidate and Reid Scholar at Royal Holloway, writer, live artist, founder and co-director of Forest Fringe

Abstract: Pablo Picasso may have said, “Good artists borrow, great artists steal” but let us reconfigure this phrase for a moment: “All artists gather”. Some gather community, some gather cultural references, historical moments, or points of inspiration. But the artist is the continuous magpie—finding materials, ideas and work that they reshape and reflect to make something new. I propose to deliver a paper on the possibility of curation as an artistic practice, specifically in reference to my experience as founder and one of the co-directors of Forest Fringe. Forest Fringe is a UK based and artist-led "producing collective"—for lack of a better word. It is a collaboration between myself, Ira Brand and Andy Field. We all identify as artists, and unlike other festivals or producers, Forest Fringe is an extension of our artistic practice. It is a curation-based work in which we create unusual contexts for a variety of artists to develop and present performance work. We are “commissioned” to create curation in a variety of contexts, and we approach these contexts as being a new piece. Our financial model corresponds to that of freelance artists—we are not regularly funded and we do not have salaries—we are paid project to project (commission to commission) and sometimes not paid at all. Having started as running a free venue at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, we have now built up a long-term community of artists who we present and work with. We are artist-led, meaning that we also present our own work in the curatorial contexts we create - a move that other producers may see as nepotistic or confusing. Over the years we have begun to ask the artists we work with to curate collectively with us. We are interested in breaking down the power dynamic between curators and artists. We want to encourage a more fluid and horizontal relationship where artists and curators share power and vulnerability. Past contexts we have created include a travelling library of audio work, late night bus tours in London, a festival of instruction based work in Athens, UK and Japanese artists responding to the city together at the Tokyo Performing Arts Meeting, and a festival of live art in an old cinema in Bangkok, focussing on live work that takes film as its starting point. The contexts are inspired by the venues where we are commissioned and the artists we wish to work with or have worked with in the past. Primarily, we create context for a community of artists through Forest Fringe and approach this as a collaborative art piece—one that is fraught, confusing, but ultimately rewarding.

Curation is a creative act—the art of taste-making, gathering, juxtaposition—and its creative aspect is likely the reason many curators work in the field. But my question is, as an artist who is also a curator—can I legitimately classify my curation as a part of my artistic practice, or is it something else? German curator and dramaturg Florian Malzacher describes curators as “among the professions that are rather close to art but not artistic themselves—not directly artistic themselves” (2010, p. 10). The question of whether or not curation is artistic is perhaps less a question of creativity, and more a question of power and vulnerability. I will be

exploring this topic through my own practice, as an artist who is also co-director of Forest Fringe.

Forest Fringe is an organisation in the UK run by myself and two other artists: Ira Brand and Andy Field. Our most high profile and long standing activity is a performance space during the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in August. Outside of our work at the Edinburgh festival, we tour curatorial projects that feature artists we have worked with and our own work, usually in the form of microfestivals to venues and festivals both nationally and internationally. We have been to Austin, Tokyo, Glasgow, Dublin, Bangkok, and Vancouver, among others. The year we did not have a space in Edinburgh, in 2012, we responded with a book of DIY Performance Scores called *Paper Stages*, inviting artists to create performance pieces for the page. An audience member could only get one of these books by donating an hour of their time to a local Edinburgh charity. For several years we gathered audio pieces by artists into a travelling sounds library—a portable library, containing books that contained MP3 players—which allowed our artists to tour their work without leaving their homes. Our curatorial projects are as diverse and responsive as the work of an artist, developed similarly to an artist’s response to a commission—we dream around the resources and context on offer. But myself, Andy and Ira also often show our own work as part of Forest Fringe, which feels both problematic and natural, depending on how you look at it.

To understand Forest Fringe as an idea, as Foucault says, “We have to be there at the birth of ideas, the bursting outward of their force... struggles carried on around ideas, for or against them” (Foucault, in Eribon, 1992, p. 282). In 2006, I lived in Edinburgh, and while I lived there I volunteered at a vegetarian co-operative arts café called the Forest, located centrally in Edinburgh, on Bristo Place. The Forest had an enviable studio space above their café which, until we took up residence, was largely unoccupied during the annual August theatre festival save for a few spontaneously organised music gigs and parties. Ryan Van Winkle, chairman of the board for the Forest Café, envisaged a fringe festival venue for the Forest Café, but one that would align with certain principles in order to maintain the larger aims of the Forest Café. Forest Café was a free event space—it was written into their manifesto—and so the venue was free, both for artists to perform at and for audience members to buy tickets. Edinburgh Fringe venues

are numbered and branded, but Ryan maintained that the Forest venue would not have a number, a purple cow, or any of the other associated Edinburgh Fringe Festival branding. The Forest Café fringe venue would act as a kind of counter-point to the commercialism of the official Fringe. It would not be a part of the fringe guide; it would not charge for tickets; and, as Forest Café was staffed co-operatively by volunteers, the fringe venue would be staffed in the same way—box office, ushering, and cleaning would be done voluntarily by the artists who performed there.

As I was someone who worked in theatre and volunteered in the café, Ryan asked me to programme the Forest Café fringe venue in its first year. In 2008, Andy Field, a friend and an artist whom I had programmed during the venue's first year, offered to be my co-director. Andy was working as a press officer at Battersea Arts Centre in London at the time, and he arranged some support from Battersea Arts Centre for 2008 in exchange for an office space throughout August at the Forest Café. As a BAC supported venue it became much easier to attract the kinds of artists and audiences that had been more reticent to get involved in the first year. The idealistic nature of what we were doing—running a fringe venue on a moneyless model in the middle of one of the most commercial festivals in the world—chimed with the press. We won a Herald Angel in that first year for the venue, and went on to win several other awards in 2009, 2010 and 2011—including a special Scotsman Fringe First for innovating new ways of presenting work at the Edinburgh Festival, and the Peter Brook Empty Space Award. Andy and I still had no office, no salary and no regular funding for the organisation, but somehow we began to be thought of and described as an “Edinburgh Institution”.

In 2010, our project expanded to microfestivals at well funded and well resourced theatre buildings throughout the UK: weekend long events in which we would occupy a different venue's space and fill it with the kind of activity associated with our Edinburgh venue. This was usually a range of small-scale interactive or intimate pieces, installations, and durational work, combined with several studio shows for a larger audience that could be finished or works-in-progress. The work we present at Forest Fringe is almost universally small scale, and what Forest Fringe was creating in our community was a way for small-scale independent theatre to make a bigger impact by working and presenting in groups. We went on to expand the concept of

microfestivals to international venues, where artists are able to charge a fee, and where we are able to charge a fee as producers. This became a way to sustain ourselves and our artists professionally.

The financial model for Forest Fringe shares more in common with a freelance artist's practice than with most producing organisations in the UK. The Edinburgh Fringe Festival is our no budget project. Our offer to artists of a free space to perform, accommodation (which we are able to provide through a grant from the Jerwood Foundation), and exposure at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival is a sufficiently valuable offer that we are genuinely overwhelmed by the number of people interested in presenting work with us there. For our microfestivals, artists we work with are paid a fee which is provided by the commissioning venue, and we are paid a curator fee and occasionally an artist fee if we present our own work. Our financial model is as vulnerable and precarious as the financial life of a freelance artist. We are reliant on commissions and project funding rather than a salary. Venues approach us to create a microfestival or other curatorial projects for them because they appreciate some element of our curatorial model as being unique. In this sense our curation is treated, at least financially, as a piece of art.

Our concept is that of small-scale work gathered together to accomplish large-scale exposure. Put more poetically, I could rephrase this as the idea that together we are stronger. But the word "together" in our case is complicated and problematic—which brings me to the complicated nature of power in the work of an artist-curator or a curator-artist. As artists with our own practices, we show our work as part of a Forest Fringe programme. I once made the joke that my relationship to Forest Fringe was like the ads on television about the anti-hair loss organisation for men in the 1980s: "I'm not just the president, I'm also a member." As artists who make smaller scale work, and who are not paid a salary for producing, Andy, Ira and myself sustain the Forest Fringe model because we need it as much as the other smaller scale artists we work with. But we are not, strictly speaking, in the same position as these artists. We have worked with around a hundred artists over the last eight years, some of whom we have long-term relationships with that blur into friendships and collaborations. One of our frequent artists was my flatmate for three years. I am also frequently hired as a freelance dramaturg for companies we have produced in the past, including Action Hero, Paper Cinema and Dan Canham. This is a

narrative that is likely familiar to many other curators. But even given these very close and long-term relationships with artists, Andy, Ira and I still do choose whom we programme at the Edinburgh Festival, and we do not guarantee long-term support to our artists. We often talk about wanting to share ownership of Forest Fringe with our artists, but that list of artists changes, and the process of selecting who makes it into our Edinburgh programme creates a power dynamic that separates us as curators from the artists who aren't us. We want Forest Fringe to be a home for artists, but I could make an uncomfortable comparison and say that as much as we love to share, myself, Andy and Ira do own that home. We are hospitable to our temporary flatmates and guests, but at the end of the day the lease is in our name.

I recently had the opportunity to view something very like the artist-curator dynamic of Forest Fringe from the side of an artist. I was invited to participate in a project in Bergen, Norway, that was not unlike the work that we do and have done at Forest Fringe. Visual artist Vlatka Horvat was working with Volt: a venueless venue in Bergen run by another artist named Marie Nerland who works without an office. Vlatka created a week-long piece for Volt in an abandoned space in Bergen. She invited four different artists all working in different mediums, including myself, to create imaginary tours of an abandoned shop in the centre of town. This project shares many common traits with projects we've undertaken for Forest Fringe in the past, and being the curated artist in an artist-curator dynamic was a both a familiar and unfamiliar experience.

What I came to appreciate was a different kind of pressure as a curated artist in this context. Although the tour was mine, the project was Vlatka's, and I became aware of the need to somehow represent her practice, without being quite sure of what that should look like. As an artist-curator for Forest Fringe, I had always thought that my position as an artist helped to smooth out a hierarchical relationship with the other artists, because I was also vulnerable. What I realised through the experience of working on "Disclosed Location" was that, although being part of a project like this was an overwhelmingly positive and inspiring one, and I understood that Vlatka was also vulnerable, the dynamic was still inevitably hierarchical. As artist and curator we were not on a level nor were we doing the same job—though I propose that we were both doing artistic jobs—but within different frameworks.

As a final point, the experience of curating Forest Fringe has undoubtedly bled into my aesthetic as an artist. I developed much of my work for unusual Forest Fringe contexts. As a producer I knew that these pieces needed to be easily staged and very flexible with little technical requirements due to the technical limitations of the spaces where we were working. A low-tech but high concept aesthetic has bled into most of the work I have made from then on. As Forest Fringe has never asked audience members to pay for tickets, I also find that money or commercial concerns essentially never enter into my thinking about work. One piece I made for Theatre Passe Muraille in Toronto was for six audience members at a time and featured a cast of six professional dancers—one dancer for every audience member. Artists work with what is available to them, and, in my case, it was few technical possibilities coupled with no concern for ticket sales. Had Forest Fringe’s Edinburgh Festival home been located in a wood shop I might have taken up carpentry. I find that a central preoccupation in my work as an artist is also vulnerability. This is a quality I often do but probably should not show as co-director of Forest Fringe. And yet of all the things I do, Forest Fringe is perhaps the most precarious, the most vulnerable and the most idealistic—balanced as it is upon the collective will of myself, Andy and Ira to keep it going.

Forest Fringe is an artist-led organisation: in our composition, pay structure, and work-model, we work as artists. And yet in a Forest Fringe project we are not in the same position as the artists whose work we support. We take their feedback seriously, there is no “stronger together” without respecting the fundamentals of a community— but this is a community that, at its core, really consists of its three co-directors and whoever we are working with at the time. What is interesting is not whether or not our curation is art. I have always been wedded to defining words, especially a word like art, loosely and according to context. I am perhaps more interested in the fact that I feel any anxiety around calling it art. This anxiety is also a result of how much time we spend administrating. Forest Fringe frequently does not feel like art; but then again, when I am trying to rewrite copy or negotiate a contract, neither does my solo practice. The anxiety is also to do with an uneasiness around power and control: around the idea of artists being “employed by” or “chosen by” or “led by” us, and the desire to respect the autonomy of those artists and the pieces they present with us. I have also always disliked the idea that when I

present work as an artist at Forest Fringe, my work could be viewed and responded to differently than the work of the other artists, by virtue of my role within our organisation. Perhaps this is inevitable, although however idealistic it may sound, I do believe that the experience of watching a performance is itself a great leveller. Once the lights go down (or up, or off, or remain switched on) the art speaks for itself, and my work succeeds or fails by the same rules as the work I curated. But whether I created or curated the work, I am vulnerable—and risk and vulnerability are, to my mind, the fundamentals of any artistic project worth undertaking.

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Biography

Deborah Pearson, PhD candidate and Reid scholar at Royal Holloway, is a writer, live artist, and the founder and co-director of Forest Fringe, a UK-based organization that makes space for risk and experimentation at the Edinburgh Festival and beyond.

26. L'in situ, l'implication communautaire et la mobilité : stratégies pour le commissariat et la création de performances participatives

Mariane Bourcheix-Laporte

Résumé : La communication présente le projet *Collective Walks/Spaces of Contestation* (UNIT/PITT Projects, Vancouver, 2013-14) comme étude de cas d'une initiative de commissariat qui examine des modes de création de performances participatives et collectives via l'implication communautaire. Ce projet étudie l'utilisation des caractéristiques formelles et conceptuelles de la marche collective comme paramètres pour la réalisation de performances participatives in situ. La communication présente et contextualise la prémisse commissariale du projet, soit d'élargir le vocabulaire de la pratique de la performance en juxtaposant les stratégies utilisées dans la performance in situ et participative/relationnelle aux stratégies activistes de mobilisation et d'implication communautaire, et fait état des stratégies employées dans sa réalisation. La communication présente également les quatre œuvres artistiques réalisés dans le cadre du projet par les artistes et groupes communautaires participants.

Je suis très heureuse d'avoir participé au symposium et d'avoir eu la chance de partager mes réflexions sur un projet de commissariat que j'ai développé dans la dernière année en occupant le poste de commissaire en résidence à [UNIT/PITT Projects](#), un centre d'artistes de Vancouver. Le projet s'intitule *Collective Walks/Spaces of Contestation* (ce qui se traduit par *Marches collectives/espaces de contestation*), un titre qui résume assez bien l'intention de recherche à la base du projet, soit d'étudier les possibilités d'employer les caractéristiques formelles et conceptuelles de la marche collective comme paramètres pour la réalisation de performances participatives in situ. En employant le terme « marche collective », je réfère à une formation ambulatoire qui se déploie comme procession publique. Je me suis intéressée plus particulièrement aux marches collectives découlant de pratiques activistes, telles que les manifestations, pour leur caractère revendicateur ou contestataire qui implique la politisation tant des participants que des espaces où ont lieu ces démonstrations publiques. En ce sens, l'idée de départ était d'élargir le vocabulaire de la pratique performative en juxtaposant les stratégies utilisées dans la performance in situ ainsi que participative ou relationnelle aux tactiques activistes de mobilisation et d'implication communautaire.

Le titre de ma communication, « L'in situ, l'implication communautaire et la mobilité : stratégies pour le commissariat et la création de performances participatives », présente en condensé les idées qui ont établi les paramètres formels et conceptuels du projet. J'exposerai tout

d'abord la prémisse de recherche qui a structuré le projet et traiterai du contexte dans lequel il s'inscrit. J'introduirai les différents volets de présentation du projet en focalisant sur la série de performances in situ qui a formé le noyau central de l'entreprise multi volets qu'a constitué *Collective Walks/Spaces of Contestation*. Finalement, je ferai part du processus collaboratif menant à la réalisation des performances et partagerai les stratégies que j'ai employées dans mon approche en tant que commissaire du projet.

La prémisse de recherche autour de laquelle le projet s'est développé était d'examiner comment la marche collective, en tant que structure événementielle et sociale, peut servir de cadre pour la réalisation de performances participatives in situ. Au printemps 2013, j'ai approché quatre artistes et collectifs d'artistes de Vancouver dont les pratiques intègrent la performance, le travail in situ et le relationnel. Je leur ai présenté la proposition suivante : soit de collaborer avec un groupe communautaire afin de concevoir et de présenter une performance dans l'espace public qui prendrait la forme d'une marche collective. Les artistes qui se sont joints à l'entreprise sont : Lauren Marsden, Didier Morelli, Gabriel Saloman et le collectif Unlearning Weekenders formé de Zoe Kreye et Catherine Grau. Les groupes communautaires avec lesquels les artistes ont collaboré sont : la Bibliothèque municipale de Vancouver, le syndicat des étudiants en danse de l'université Simon Fraser; un programme d'éducation alternative pour adolescents autochtones à risques (le Outreach Alternative Program à la Britannia Secondary School); un groupe de résidents opposés à l'expansion des pipelines à Burnaby en banlieue de Vancouver (Burnaby Residents Opposing Kinder Morgan Expansion), et un groupe ad hoc d'artistes, de citoyens et du public de la galerie qui s'est formé suite à la réalisation d'un projet antérieur du collectif Unlearning Weekenders.

Le projet s'est décliné en plusieurs volets (dont certains étaient toujours en cours de réalisation lors de la tenue du symposium).¹ Toutefois, les collaborations entre les artistes et groupes communautaires forment le cœur du projet et les autres volets ont été conçus dans le but de traiter des idées qui sous-tendent la prémisse commissariale et d'étayer le processus menant à la réalisation des performances. Dans son ensemble, le projet *Collective Walks/Spaces of Contestation* s'est décliné à travers : une série de cinq conférences (présentées entre octobre 2013 et avril 2014) dont l'objectif était de créer un cadre discursif pour le projet; une série de

performances in situ (présentées entre mars et avril 2014); une exposition en galerie (présentée du 22 mars au 3 mai 2014) offrant aux artistes la possibilité de créer des œuvres en parallèle aux performances et documentant, par le biais de matériaux accumulés dans les derniers mois au fil d'ateliers, les processus collaboratifs dans lesquels ces derniers se sont engagés; et finalement, une série de publications qui permettra de documenter et de disséminer la recherche, tant commissariale qu'artistique, qui a alimenté le projet tout au long de son processus de développement.²

Tel que mentionné ci-haut, le projet n'était pas complété lors de la tenue du symposium toutefois, j'ai cru qu'il était à propos de faire état du projet alors qu'il était toujours en cours de réalisation. En effet, tout au long du développement du projet, l'accent a été mis sur le processus plus que sur le produit fini. Les multiples volets de *Collective Walks/Spaces of Contestation*, en se juxtaposant ou en se chevauchant, ont selon moi créé un contexte propice au développement en continu des idées qui ont alimenté l'évolution du projet dans son ensemble. En ce sens, l'aspect dialogique du projet ne se limite pas aux relations collaboratives établies entre les artistes et groupes communautaires participants. Je crois en effet que la présentation de la série de conférences avant et pendant la période de développement des performances a eu de l'incidence sur la manière dont celles-ci se sont élaborées. De même, la série de publications qui sera produite permettra le prolongement du projet dans un médium qui, contrairement à la série de performances et à l'exposition en galerie, n'est pas limité dans le temps.

Avant de traiter du cadre contextuel qui a inspiré la conception de ce projet et de présenter plus en détail les performances qui ont été élaborées et l'exposition qui a été présentée à la galerie UNIT/PITT, je désire brièvement faire part des stratégies que j'ai employées dans la conception des multiples volets du projet. Ces stratégies ont résulté d'une part dans l'organisation de la série de conférences *Spaces of Contestation : Art, Activism and the City* et, d'autre part dans la mise en place de dispositifs qui ont permis d'élargir le cadre du travail créatif des artistes.

L'idée de présenter une série de conférences en parallèle aux éléments artistiques du projet était d'élargir sa portée critique en y greffant des discussions sortant du cadre d'un

discours artistique. De plus, étant donné que le projet était présenté à Vancouver, un contexte où le développement urbain a grande incidence sur les relations économiques et sociales qui structurent la ville, j'ai cru nécessaire de traiter de façon critique de concepts se rattachant à la présentation in situ du projet ainsi qu'aux connexions que l'on peut établir entre la pratique artistique, les tactiques activistes et les procédés permettant l'activation démocratique de l'espace public. Ainsi, les conférences présentées dans le cadre de ce volet du projet ont traité de sujets comme : le rôle du capitalisme dans le développement urbain et dans l'érosion de l'espace public ; une critique des modèles de développement urbain pensés en fonction de la « classe créative » selon Richard Florida ; les répercussions néfastes de l'embourgeoisement sur les artistes, qui contribuent à l'essor de celui-ci bien malgré eux ; le dialogue que peut entamer la pratique artistique avec les pratiques radicales, activistes et contestataires ; et finalement, la relation qu'entretient l'institution artistique avec ces idées et pratiques.³

En tant que commissaire du projet, j'ai tenté dès le départ d'établir un climat qui favorise l'échange entre les artistes. Nous avons tenu plusieurs rencontres de groupe (rencontres entre les artistes participants et la commissaire), ce qui a permis aux artistes de faire part à leurs collègues des développements des projets qu'ils élaboraient en collaboration avec les groupes communautaires participants. Ces rencontres ont aussi permis de traiter collectivement des grandes lignes du projet et des idées s'en dégageant, ce qui a favorisé la cohésion du projet dans son ensemble. Dans le cadre d'un projet misant sur la collaboration et qui s'inscrit dans une tradition artistique explorant l'espace social comme espace et matériel de création, je crois qu'il a été bénéfique de créer un espace dialogique dans toutes les sphères menant à la réalisation du projet, car cela a permis d'actualiser en amont une stratégie employée en aval.

Contexte

Dans les dernières années, nous avons été témoins d'une vague de mobilisations citoyennes qui se sont produites un peu partout sur la planète. Je pense ici aux événements du *Printemps arabe*, aux mouvements *Indignados* et *Occupy*, ainsi qu'aux manifestations massives qui ont eu lieu récemment en Turquie, au Brésil et au Venezuela. Le Québec, et Montréal plus particulièrement, n'ont pas été en reste avec les manifestations quotidiennes et les innombrables processions de casseroles qui se sont produites lors du *Printemps érable*. Évidemment, il est

impossible d'assimiler tous ces mouvements sous un seul cadre d'analyse, car les revendications sociopolitiques qui les sous-tendent sont diverses et complexes. Néanmoins, nous pouvons affirmer que tous ces mouvements se rejoignent au niveau de la forme et qu'ils démontrent la force de l'occupation spatiale collective, qu'elle soit sédentaire ou ambulatoire, en tant qu'action politique radicale.

Ce type d'action collective positionne ou repositionne la rue, qu'elle soit symbole ou espace réel, comme un forum démocratique. Ce processus a pour effet la remise en question du caractère public de l'espace public. La présence de dizaines, centaines ou milliers de corps formant un tout – un sujet pluriel et autogéré qu'on pourrait qualifier de corps collectif – constitue intrinsèquement un acte de re-politisation de l'espace occupé. En occupant l'espace public, ce corps collectif interrompt momentanément l'ordre établi qui régularise cet espace. Il intervient dans sa structure même, ce qui a pour effet de momentanément reconfigurer le nexus de relations le régissant. En reconfigurant les relations sociales structurant un espace, ce processus collectif permet l'individuation radicale.

Dans l'élaboration de *Collective Walks/Spaces of Contestation*, je me suis intéressée à ce processus, à son caractère naturellement participatif, car collectif, et à ses qualités performatives, et me suis penchée plus particulièrement sur les caractéristiques participatives et performatives de la marche collective en tant que structure événementielle. De par son caractère nomade, la marche collective infléchit et reconfigure temporairement les relations structurantes des espaces toujours changeants qu'elle traverse. La marche collective module l'environnement urbain qui est re-vécu, re-pensé et re-possédé par la masse piétonne. C'est en tenant compte de ce contexte et de ces considérations que j'ai invité les artistes participants au projet à considérer la marche collective comme structure événementielle, et plus particulièrement comme structure événementielle produisant de nouvelles relations sociales et spatiales. J'ai employé le terme marche collective—plutôt que manifestation ou procession—afin de ne pas limiter les interprétations et actualisations possibles de ce cadre.

Jumeler les artistes à des groupes communautaires est une stratégie qui a servi à contourner la problématique du concept, assez abstrait, de participation, surtout dans un contexte

de présentation in situ où le public est majoritairement accidentel ou inopiné. Dans un tel contexte, la réaction du public est imprévisible et les possibilités de créer des situations de médiation sont limitées. Plutôt que de mettre en scène des situations qui interpelleraient un public accidentel à prendre part à des marches performatives dirigées par les artistes, la stratégie a plutôt été d'impliquer des groupes communautaires directement dans l'élaboration des paramètres conceptuels et formels des performances ainsi que dans le processus créatif menant à la présentation de celles-ci. Les artistes participants au projet ont tout d'abord élaboré les grandes lignes de leurs intérêts de recherche en réponse à la prémisse que je leur avais présentée. Nous avons par la suite approché des groupes communautaires dont les intérêts des membres, mandats et activités étaient liés aux idées que les artistes désiraient explorer.

Le processus de jumelage a été assez organique et a donné lieu à un large spectre de collaborations entre artistes et groupes communautaires divers, et donc à l'élaboration de projets assez différents les uns des autres. De mon point de vue (et selon mes intérêts en tant que commissaire), ce spectre est intéressant, car il démontre comment les possibilités d'interpréter le cadre conceptuel et formel que j'ai présenté aux artistes ont été actualisées. Cela démontre aussi à quel point les artistes se sont approprié ce cadre et l'ont fait correspondre aux intérêts de leurs pratiques.⁴ On parle beaucoup des artistes-commissaires (dont je suis) et des commissaires-auteurs, mais je crois qu'il est essentiel pour un commissaire qui établit les paramètres d'un projet menant à la réalisation de nouvelles œuvres de la part des artistes de ne pas imposer leur vision sur le processus créatif de ceux-ci.

Oeuvres artistiques

Je présenterai à présent brièvement les performances qui ont été présentées dans le cadre de ce projet. Celles-ci correspondent à l'aboutissement des processus collaboratifs qui ont eu lieu entre les artistes et groupes communautaires participants. Je traiterai également des œuvres que les artistes ont présentées dans le cadre de l'exposition en galerie.

S'intéressant aux procédés selon lesquels l'information circule, évolue et devient désuète, Lauren Marsden a initié une œuvre qui se voulait en dialogue avec les structures physiques et institutionnelles de la bibliothèque municipale de Vancouver.⁵ L'artiste a instauré un partenariat

avec la Vancouver Public Library afin de travailler avec les bibliothécaires responsables de trier le matériel devant être retiré de la collection de la bibliothèque. Ce processus est controversé, car plusieurs personnes croient qu'une bibliothèque municipale a une fonction d'archive. Ainsi, les bibliothécaires avec lesquels l'artiste a collaboré étaient contents de pouvoir donner une deuxième vie à du matériel se retrouvant hors circulation. Lauren Marsden a également travaillé avec un groupe de dix danseurs, joints à travers le syndicat des étudiants en danse de l'Université Simon Fraser, ce qui a permis de situer l'expérience corporelle au centre du projet. Avec ces derniers, l'artiste a développé une performance de longue durée dans laquelle les danseurs ont déambulé autour de l'édifice de la branche principale de la bibliothèque (pendant deux heures) en tenant en équilibre sur leur tête un livre mis hors circulation qu'ils avaient choisi parmi du matériel présélectionné par les bibliothécaires. Les danseurs exécutaient une routine chaque fois qu'un livre tombait au sol, ce qui a eu pour effet de capter l'attention du public inopiné se trouvant sur les lieux. Poursuivant cette chorégraphie, les danseurs se sont déplacés de la bibliothèque à la galerie UNIT/PITT, où la performance s'est terminée lorsqu'ils ont déposé les livres sur le sol. Pendant la durée de l'exposition, les livres, qui étaient endommagés par la performance, ont servi d'archive matérielle de l'événement.

À l'été 2013, Gabriel Saloman a approché le groupe *Burnaby Residents Opposing Kinder Morgan Expansion* (BROKE), une formation citoyenne opposée au projet d'expansion du pipeline Trans Mountain de la compagnie Kinder Morgan, dont une portion importante est prévue dans la localité de Burnaby située en banlieue de Vancouver. L'idée de départ était d'organiser une procession impliquant les membres du groupe qui cartographierait l'emplacement des pipelines (existants et futurs) dans la ville ; une manière rendre visible, grâce à la présence de corps dans l'espace, ces dispositifs qui sont sous terre et qui ainsi demeurent invisibles. Après plusieurs mois de collaboration, l'artiste et le groupe ont finalement organisé la tenue d'une grande manifestation performative—ponctuée de performances, de manœuvres et d'interventions in situ—qui s'est déployée pendant une journée entière et à travers plusieurs quartiers de la ville (et qui cartographiait, à plus grande échelle, les pipelines de la ville). Plusieurs autres groupes activistes et formations de résidents se sont joints à l'entreprise et ont collaboré à élargir la portée de la procession (une flotte de bateaux dans le Burrard Inlet a été organisée conjointement par un groupe de résidents d'une ville voisine; des factions locales

d'organisations telles que Greenpeace, Rising Tide et Forest Ethics ont contribué à la tenue d'une série de discours, et l'événement a été parrainé par le Sacred Trust Initiative de la première nation Tsleil-Waututh). En galerie, l'artiste a exposé des pancartes réalisées lors d'un atelier collectif, du matériel d'archive lié à l'histoire du développement des pipelines et de l'industrie pétrolière à Burnaby, ainsi qu'une œuvre créée en réponse au projet.⁶

Didier Morelli désirait collaborer avec un groupe d'adolescents fréquentant le quartier où il réside, soit le quartier multiculturel Commercial Drive dans l'est de Vancouver. L'idée de départ de l'artiste était d'amener un groupe d'élèves du quartier à réfléchir à l'idée d'occupation de l'espace et à la relation qu'ils entretiennent avec le quartier dans lequel ils évoluent, et d'affirmer leur présence et leur subjectivité à travers des activités performatives. Pendant une période de quatre mois, l'artiste a dirigé une série d'ateliers à l'école secondaire Britannia impliquant les élèves, professeurs et travailleurs sociaux du programme alternatif Outreach, qui est un programme d'éducation spécialisée pour jeunes autochtones à risques. Au courant des ateliers, l'artiste a introduit les participants à différentes pratiques en art de la performance et a dirigé des discussions de groupe traitant de concepts tels que la collectivité et ses multiples déclinaisons, la marche et l'expérience corporelle ambulatoire, et les différentes implications d'un acte de contestation (soit les concepts centraux du projet *Collective Walks/Sapces of Contestation*). L'artiste a également invité les élèves à prendre part à des exercices physiques amenant les participants à sortir de leur zone de confort, à travailler ensemble et à ne pas avoir peur du ridicule. Ces séances ont finalement donné lieu à la tenue d'une procession dans laquelle les élèves ont transporté, de leur salle de classe à la galerie UNIT/PITT, le matériel qu'ils avaient créé ou accumulé lors des ateliers. Rendus dans la galerie, les élèves ont apposé ce matériel sur une murale évolutive que l'artiste avait constituée au courant de l'exposition telle une esquisse géante présentant ses idées et documentant les ateliers réalisés.⁷

Le collectif Unleraning Weekenders, formé des artistes Zoe Kreye et Catherine Grau, s'est inspiré de la tradition des clubs de marche pour concocter un programme de cinq marches participatives visant le « désapprentissage » à travers une exploration sensorielle de l'environnement urbain⁸. La formule adoptée, soit des marches hebdomadaires ouvertes au public, a permis la participation tant de personnes ayant une relation directe au projet (les

participants d'un projet antérieur du collectif qui désiraient poursuivre l'expérience et contribuer à l'élaboration des paramètres d'un nouveau projet) que d'un public plus large joint par l'intermédiaire d'UNIT/PITT Projects. Avec le premier groupe de participants, les artistes ont élaboré une série d'instructions de marches ayant pour but de déconstruire les paradigmes dominants qui régissent notre relation à l'espace et aux autres. S'inspirant de ces instructions, les artistes ont par la suite ponctué les marches hebdomadaires qu'elles ont dirigées d'une série d'exercices physiques, de méditations et d'improvisations de groupe. Axés sur le mouvement, le jeu et la sensorialité, ces exercices visaient à déprogrammer les comportements appris des participants et à ainsi entraîner une appréciation nouvelle du monde par le biais du « désapprentissage ». Dans la galerie UNIT/PITT, les artistes ont créé une installation qui a évolué tout au long de l'exposition. Cette installation (constituée de sculptures d'argiles, de bûches de bois, de bâtons de marche, et d'éléments naturels—roches, feuilles, brindilles) a servi de point de rencontre d'où débiter les marches hebdomadaires, d'espace de réflexion permettant une discussion de groupe après les marches, et de lieu d'espace de travail des artistes.

La série de publications (livres d'artistes réalisés par les artistes participants et la commissaire) est actuellement en cours de réalisation. Ces publications permettent de réfléchir autrement aux idées sous-jacentes du projet ainsi que de faire un retour sur l'expérience collective, collaborative et performative vécue par les artistes et les groupes communautaires qui ont participé au projet.

¹ La performance de Gabriel Saloman et de BROKE (*The People's Procession Against the Pipelines*) et la quatrième marche de la série *Unlearning Weekend Club* de Zoe Kreye et Catherine, ont eu lieu pendant la tenue du symposium. La performance de Didier Morelli et des étudiants et professeurs du Outreach Alternative Program, la dernière conférence de la *Spaces of Contestation Speaker Series*, la dernière marche du *Unlearning Weekend Club*, et le finissage de l'exposition (incluant un panel avec les artistes) ont eu lieu dans la semaine suivant le symposium. Au moment de la publication des actes de colloques, la série de publications qui fait suite au projet était en voie d'être éditée.

² La série de conférences, intitulée *Spaces of Contestation : Art Activism and the City*, a été présentée au campus Woodward's de l'Université Simon Fraser (SFU) entre le 22 octobre 2013 et le 16 avril 2014 en partenariat avec le [SFU Vancity Office of Community Engagement](#) et le [SFU Institute for the Humanities](#). Les performances ont été présentées dans divers espaces publics de Vancouver et Burnaby entre le 22 mars et le 20 avril 2014. L'exposition s'est tenue à la galerie UNIT/PITT du 22 mars au 3 mai 2014. Les publications donnant suite au projet sont publiées conjointement par UNIT/PITT Projects et [Publication Studio Vancouver](#).

³ Les conférences présentées sont les suivantes (leurs enregistrements vidéo peuvent être visionnés sur le site de UNIT/PITT en cliquant sur les hyperliens) : *Scarcity Makes the City* de Geoff Mann (22 octobre 2013) ; *Neoliberal urbanism: artful alternatives?* par Jamie Peck (12 novembre 2013) ; *What Is Already Going On* par le collectif Urban Subjects (5 février 2014) ; *Riot Dogs and Research Labs: Poetry and Struggle* par Stephen Collis (12 mars 2014) ; et *Capitalist Cocktails and Moscow Mules: Activism in the Museum and Gallery* par Kirsty Robertson (16 avril 2014).

⁴ Étant moi-même artiste, je m'efforce toujours, dans les projets de commissariat que j'entreprends, de respecter les spécificités des pratiques des artistes avec lesquels je travaille, et de ne pas leur imposer les concepts qui sous-tendent ma pratique commissariale.

⁵ Pour plus d'informations sur ce projet et pour visionner sa documentation veuillez consulter le lien suivant: <http://www.helenpittgallery.org/exhibitions/past/collective-walkspaces-of-contestation/lauren-marsden-in-pursuit-of-perpetual-motion/>.

⁶ Pour plus d'informations sur ce projet et pour visionner sa documentation veuillez consulter le lien suivant: <http://www.helenpittgallery.org/exhibitions/past/collective-walkspaces-of-contestation/gabriel-mindel-saloman-and-burnaby-residents-opposing-kinder-morgan-expansion/>

⁷ Pour plus d'informations sur ce projet et pour visionner sa documentation veuillez consulter le lien suivant: <http://www.helenpittgallery.org/exhibitions/past/collective-walkspaces-of-contestation/didier-morelli-and-outreach-alternative-program/>

⁸ Pour plus d'informations sur ce projet et pour visionner sa documentation veuillez consulter le lien suivant: <http://www.helenpittgallery.org/exhibitions/past/collective-walkspaces-of-contestation/zoe-kreye-and-catherine-grau-the-unlearning-walking-club/>

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Biographie

Mariane Bourcheix-Laporte est une artiste visuelle et commissaire indépendante basée à Vancouver. Elle a obtenu une maîtrise en pratique des arts de l'Université Simon Fraser, Vancouver, en 2012. Elle a présenté son travail artistique et réalisé des projets de commissariat à travers le Canada. Elle est la co-fondatrice du collectif d'édition et de commissariat palindromes basé à Montréal. Elle a contribué aux magazines Inter : art actuel, Decoy Magazine, Esse : art et opinions et C Magazine.

27. Site Specific Theatre Curation: An Italian case study

Kiara Pipino, MFA, Theater Director, Artistic Director of Festival Internazionale Valle Christi (Italy), Teacher at Grand Valley State University (Michigan)

Abstract: The artistic and technical challenges of directing theatrical events in archaeological environments often necessitate greater collaboration between organizers and artists thus answering the questions: how much is the environment influencing the performance and the performers? What are the advantages and the disadvantages of such a process and why is it still worth pursuing, in terms of artistic achievement and social revitalization? This paper will present an Italian case study by first exploring the birth and development of the *Festival Internazionale Valle Christi*, a summer theatre Festival taking place in Italy, in city of Rapallo (Genoa) within the Italian Riviera Ligure. The stage of the festival is the archaeological remains of a medieval monastery (built in 1204), which had been abandoned for several decades. Originally, the goal was to bring the monument back to life and make it available to the community. A brief outline of what had to be done and was done in order to legally “adopt” and operate the monument will be provided. The paper will then focus on the mission statement of the festival, which implements the artistic choices that have determined the calendar of events and productions for the past eleven years. Examples of “site specific inspired” productions (*The Anthology of Spoon River, Clytemnestra*) will be illustrated along with information on how touring shows and artists (*Phaedra, My Father’s War, Dario Fo, Giorgio Albertazzi*) have managed to adjust/restage their performances to take advantage of the existing scenario. The ongoing and everlasting struggle to access funding, reach for donors and sponsors and access new audiences will also concisely be mentioned, with specific reference to the grave economic crisis Italy is now going through and which has caused severe cuts to most cultural activities in the country. Finally, the paper will delineate how effective a recurring event – the festival – was in revitalizing the monument and in making it an active part of the cultural and economic life of its community after decades of oblivion.

The Italian territory is famous for being rich in archaeological remains, a richness that we, Italians, take for granted. This heritage somehow bothers us at times, particularly when new constructions need to be stopped because a Roman “domus” has been uncovered or some Etruscan tombs have been found. Usually, the remains get to be documented and covered back again, since there is no money to restore or to give them the treatment they would require to successfully survive the exposure to the contemporary environment. Besides, there are too many open archaeological and historical sites already to be taken care of, and very little funds to do it.

In September 2002, I came across the remains of Valle Christi as part of an academic project of the School of Architecture of University of Genoa. The project focused on discovering hidden and forgotten architectural gems in the territory, monuments or buildings that carried history and made a significant difference in the social and urban patterns of society some time long ago. Our goal was to find some of them and try to bring them back to life and to the attention of the community. Valle Christi was a medieval monastery built in 1206 in the countryside just outside the seaside town of Rapallo (Genoa). Because of its geomorphological characteristics, Liguria has many architectural treasures to be discovered. As in the past, it was mainly inhabited the Appenini mountains, inland and far from the sea since the sea brought pirates and troubles. When modern times moved the people closer to the shores, most inland settlements and monuments were completely abandoned. And since the road system did not reach these abandoned areas, 'civilization' did not reach most of them.

When we found Valle Christi, it was deserted and in a complete state of abandon even though the site was technically open to the public: tall grass covered most of what used to be the main nave and other vegetation had made its way through the walls of the building. Although it was a sad view, it was sublime. It was living proof of nature's superiority on mankind. Even when we try to force it into different shape or try to overwhelm it by super imposing on it a massive brick stone building, Nature always wins its space back and leaves up powerless. Standing there, I felt like I had stepped back into the XVIII century, when artists and scholars all over Europe started rediscovering the classic remains and I was standing right in front of a scenario Piranesi would draw.



Figure 1 - Dario Fo's sketch of Valle Christi

Valle Christi immediately seemed to be the perfect match for our search, since it was indeed an interesting monument, although in ruins. It was Romanic in structure: it had a heavy but simple in the ground plan, Gothic decorations of mullioned windows, and grand proportions of the bell tower. The building was fascinating. It talked of the past, of rough, glorious and dark times. Legends tell of nuns being buried alive behind the bell tower and of infants left to die in the cold. People say that during some nights you could still hear the ghost of the nun moaning and crying in the small woods behind the tower.



Figure 2. Valle Christi

The complex includes a church, a dried out well, a couple of other buildings which probably served as housing for the nuns, a massive graveyard of the Great Plague of the 14th century, which is only recognizable by the different level of the ground... and by the bones that sometimes make their way back to the surface when mowing the grass and finally three monumental unmarked tombs, quite likely belonging to the priors of the monastery. Its location was also convenient: it was just a few minutes from downtown and right off a main road, which happened to be one of the pilgrimage routes to France in the Middle Ages.

At the time, the University of Genoa was collaborating with the Drama Department of Goldsmiths College (London); therefore, we had access to actors and performers. The idea of working on a site-specific theatrical event came naturally, and soon the monastery became an open stage where actors, students and faculty worked together to give back the monastery at least some of its past splendor. We decided upon a production of *The Spoon River Anthology* by E. Lee Masters (1915), as it appeared to be an appropriate choice for that given space as the presence of an abandoned graveyard could very much relate to the setting of Masters' collection of poems and we were confident that it would have provided the production with a touch of truthful and evocative atmosphere which could have not been replicated anywhere else. The English students and faculty worked on the adaptation of the poems into a play, while the Italians focused on the design elements, the promotion and marketing.

Although we could not embark a proper restoration project, since that would have cost too much time and money, we needed to make the entire location safe for the audience and for us working there as well. After cleaning the remains, we worked on stabilizing some of the walls,

we had the municipal security committee come and supervise the building and give us green light as to where people were allow to stay, sit or pass. Some areas, like the outer residential buildings, had to be marked as ‘off limits’. It was hard work. It involved a great deal of mowing, gardening, cleaning and finally securing the building to allow it to be utilized as a performance space thus retaining its integrity and authentic ancient charm.

The production included some actors from the Acting School of the Teatro Stabile di Genova (the Italian National Theatre), therefore some of the acting was in English and some in Italian. The rehearsal process was exciting, tiring and fruitful. It was one of the hottest summers in a long time: working all day under the sun was brutal, especially for the fair skinned British. Working all together, actors, designers and scholars allowed us to come to a greater owning of the place, of its meaning and of its potential. We all felt the responsibility of telling the one story that would combine the decadent beauty of literary work with the enchanting reality of the stones. The entire site needed a voice to speak its ‘aura’ and allow people back into his fascinating past: we wanted the audience to experience that feeling by following the story and the actors in a ‘journey’ through the monastery. We wanted the community to welcome back the monument into their social scenarios, which was also, as mentioned before, part of our academic project.

The show opened on July 29, 2003 and ran for three nights. The audience was guided from one scene to the next one by a ‘Master of Ceremony’: a spooky undertaker with a tall hat.



Figure 3- Spoon River

The community loved it. We were not expecting such crowds of people to come see the show and we were genuinely surprised to find out that they were mostly locals, who had heard of the monastery but had actually never been there before. Since the production was well received by the community, the mayor of the town of Rapallo asked the University to make the ‘festival’ a recurrent summer event and promised to help with management and financing. The city council was hoping to diversify their summer touristic offerings and possibly gain some visibility on the national cultural scene, like other cities famous for their site-specific cultural events such as Borgo Verezzi, Spoleto, Siracusa and Taormina. The University of Genoa promised support

but could not completely take over the festival so they asked me if I was interested in doing it since I had functioned as the artistic coordinator of the event. I accepted.

The City Council of Rapallo helped me navigate the complex laws and regulations dealing with archaeological remains and national endowment. If I were to operate the site as the location of the Festival, it was necessary for me to have unique access to it, at least for the summer time. The mayor agreed on allowing me to apply to ‘adopt a monument’, which is an Italian Municipal decree that relieves the City Council from ordinary maintenance of the monument and functions as a bailment. However, I had to partner with a nonprofit organization, the Associazione Culturale Valle Christi, since the decree did not allow individuals to adopt monuments and run them for their own personal profit. I had to opt for an association and not for a foundation, since the city council could not commit to a recurrent and consistent economic contribution.

The Associazione Culturale Valle Christi was granted the sole use of Valle Christi in the fall of 2003, strictly for the months of May, June, July and August. The Association included artists, managers and administrators that to this day are still working on the summer festival and on other cultural events taking place in the winter in different locations within the territory of Rapallo. The Association was able to raise funds to provide Valle Christi with better facilities and technical elements like house seating, a state of the art stage, a booth, lights and sound. The space could not be rigged with a typical technical system, however, because of the nature of the building and national restrictions about archaeological remains, so all technical elements like lights and sound needed to be accommodated on the side of the stage, on stands, on the ground,

or at the back of the house seating area beside the technical control booth. No permanent or semi permanent element could be directly insinuated in the remains.

The Associazione Culturale Valle Christi, according to its mission statement, was oriented towards:

...promoting and enhancing the cultural richness of the territory through the work of artists in the visual, literary and performing arts, where the environment is considered as an active element of the creative and artistic process. Original work, adaptations, classic and acclaimed material will be supported, as long as it relates and complements the physical environment in which it will be showcased.

As the president of the Association and its Artistic Director of the Festival since 2003, I have seen the Festival Internazionale Valle Christi grow immensely, as one of the very few site specific summer festivals in Italy that included international artists and original productions. During all these years, we have been producing classic pieces along with contemporary theatre and musical reviews. Our creative process always starts from the environment and the architectural scenario providing a backdrop to our stage.

Following the example of *The Anthology of Spoon River*, we produced *The Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* by T.S. Eliot (1939) in 2004. The space was conceived as a thrust, with the audience seating in the main nave and the actors utilizing the front and the sides of the site. Great attention was devoted to costumes and masks as we wanted the actors to work with the playfulness of the cat without losing the humanity of the characters depicted by Eliot. During the rehearsal process the actors were also able to familiarize with some feral cats of the area, which resulted in a show featuring real cats as guest stars. Most of these cats ended up being adopted by cast or audience members.



Figure 4 Cast of *The Old Possum's Book Of Practical Cats*

Originally, the festival only produced two shows and hosted other two touring events or artists. Particular attention was devoted to experimental theatre—with shows combining different styles and genres. Emerging artists also invited in order to showcase their new work. Also we took care to reach out to the theatrical national community in order to provide the festival with special guests and major events. We hoped in that way to eventually attract wider audiences who would then appreciate the location and the program, which would lead them to come back to see the less well-known artists. In the last six years, the festival started having six to eight shows on its calendar with one or two productions running approximately between mid-July and mid-August to coincide with the peak of the touristic season in Rapallo. As part of the technical process, guest performers were granted enough time to work in the space as most of them felt compelled to get inspired by it and incorporate it even more in their pieces.

Dario Fo, for instance, presented his masterpiece *Mistero Buffo* (1969) in July 2006 and thoroughly enjoyed giving Pope Boniface VIII a grand entrance on the stage via the side apses. Similarly, the late Franca Rame's monologue *Mamma Pace* ("Mother Peace") about a mother whose son had died at war, immediately acquired a more profound and sacred meaning as she was sitting on the remains of the main nave walls, by the bell tower. Giorgio Albertazzi became Dante Alighieri and staged his reading of the *Divine Comedy* as he walked in and out of the space through the bushes and by the well, with the audience almost surrounding him, in an arena configuration.



Figure 5 Dario Fo

In 2008 the festival produced a one-woman show based on Clytemnestra, Agamemnon's wife, starring Elisabetta Pozzi. The script was adapted from Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (458 B.B.), O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931), Hoffmansthal's *Elektra* (1909) and Yourcenar's

Fires (1981), therefore it was a combination of classic Greek text and contemporary poetic writing. During the rehearsal process, the actress focused on combining the dramatic beats with different physical environments and locations, also helped by the original soundtrack composed and performed live by Daniele D'Angelo. The entire space became a psychological scene, resonating with words and melodies, in which invisible partners hid behind the walls or underneath the bell tower as the actress addressed them, questioned them and danced with them.



Figure 6 Elisabetta Pozzi in *Clytemnestra*

A great example of theatrical and artistic collaboration lead to the production of *My Father's War* by Bob Ford (2008), an American playwright, at its first European production in

Valle Christi in 2009. The playwright was able to join the cast and the festival for the entire rehearsal process, which ended up being an extremely fortunate and rewarding experience. The play was based on a true story about episodes of an American soldier's life at war during World War II. The play had an episodic structure, with flash backs and forwards in time, as the lead character remembered those tragic moments of his life, the people he met and the friends he lost. A choice was made to rely on lights and sounds more than in additional scenic pieces, therefore the monastery was transformed into trenches and open fields through quick light changes and a few additional elements. Costumes played a big role in providing the time frame and the atmosphere for the show, as we were able to utilize original military uniforms. Having to work almost uniquely with front and sidelights made it possible to stretch and create the illusion of a metaphorical space, a limbo space suspended in time, where the real remains of the monastery acquired a post apocalyptic iconography. Since the buildings were in ruin, it wasn't hard to believe they had just been bombed.

Overall, the architectural environment of Valle Christi greatly influenced the outcome of every show, usually by complementing and improving the performance rather than becoming an obstacle to the story telling. And that was because in curating the selection of the productions and performances that every summer take the stage a great effort is devoted to find those scripts or performers whose strength lies in the message they are delivering rather than just in the spectacle. The truthfulness of a good story and of well-developed characters could take advantage of the environment and use it to its own benefit, regardless of the time frame of the piece. And if it is true that you lose the "magic box", the theatre, where creating the illusion and helping the audience suspend their disbelief is facilitated by technology and by the

characteristics of building itself, it is also true that those shows that really embrace the site-specific theatre philosophy transform the real environment into a magic box for the audience in no time and with very little technical support.

As the artistic director and curator of the Festival, it is always a challenge to balance the need for popular choices with the research and appreciation of experimental and culturally intriguing performances. A summer theatre festival in the Italian Riviera attracts tourists as well as locals, but there seems to be an overall reluctance towards the “unknown” and to the not immediately recognizable. It is mandatory for theatre to have an audience, and not just from an economic point of view. If nobody wants to come and see the show, there is no need for the actors to be on stage and donors and institutional supporters will back out and leave us penniless. Therefore it has been our choice to define a through line, a theme, for our seasons. That has allowed us to combine different genres—from theatre to classical music—popular shows and more experimental ones. The attempt has been to instill the audience with the curiosity of seeing how the theme would have been developed in the different performances.

In over ten years the *Festival Internazionale Valle Christi* has acquired national visibility, has won awards and has a good number of patrons and subscribers. We built our audience. The festival did indeed bring new tourists to Rapallo, although we are not talking of football or rock concert crowds.

The *Festival Internazionale Valle Christi* has been surviving thanks to the contributions of the City Council of Rapallo (for about 12.000 Euros), sponsors and private donors. As the city council cut their contribution in half in 2011, sponsors also have started diminishing. The

community is still being very supportive and passionate about the work, but that alone will not unfortunately make a significant difference in the budget. This leaves us to question what may become not only of the festival itself, but of the monument as well. Ten years ago it was an abandoned place; it took an entire decade to give it back some pride and make it a vibrant part of the social and cultural life of Rapallo. It will likely take very little time to decay again, if nothing allows it to come back to life, even if only in the summertime.

We are now in the process of selecting shows for the upcoming summer 2014. Some contracts have already been signed and dates marked down on the calendar. We are also focusing on a new challenge, which is to associate the festival with an educational program, which would bring scholars and students for one week of intense theatre training. The idea is to open the festival to the international community of artists and practitioners even more, so that we would be able to widen our visibility and aim for new audiences (and funding opportunities).



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Biography

Kiara Pipino, MFA, is currently teaching classes including acting, musical theatre and movement for actors at Grand Valley State University in Michigan. In 2002, she initiated and still serves as the Artistic Director of the *Festival Internazionale Valle Christi* in Rapallo (Genova) whose iconic feature is its location: the remains of a Medieval monastery.

28. APPEL AUX ARTS MITOYENS

Jean-Paul Rathier

Résumé :

1 — Un questionnement des frontières

L'histoire, l'humeur, les nécessités de l'existence métamorphosent sans cesse les frontières de nos multiples territoires d'appartenance. Au gré des fluctuations de nos désirs et de nos visions des voisins, la frontière se fait alternativement clôture, lisière, lieu de passage et d'échanges. Tantôt nous jugeons bon de vivre solitaire et caché, tantôt nous préférons nous montrer sociable et hospitalier. En la matière, rien n'est fixe, définitif. Et c'est tant mieux !

2 — Une pratique artistique de l'échange

Cause commune des artistes et des citoyens, les arts mitoyens investissent ces formes mouvantes, vivantes de la frontière : entre la sphère privée et l'espace public ; entre l'intime et le social ; entre les personnes, les groupes, les genres, les générations. Ils en font un espace politique et ludique pour partager des expériences de création. Là, se mettent en jeu des objets du quotidien qui nous séparent et nous relie à nos voisins. Tels le mur, la palissade, le grillage, la haie, le fossé entre deux propriétés ; et tout autant les signes, les images, les paroles, les gestes à travers lesquels s'expriment nos singularités et la diversité culturelle d'une société.

3 — La culture comme éthique du voisinage

La mitoyenneté ? De la proximité à bonne distance. Une charge commune indispensable à l'autonomie de chacun. Autrement dit, la mitoyenneté c'est le principe actif d'une culture de la démocratie. Les arts mitoyens en appellent à une joyeuse mise en mouvement de nos identités respectives pour produire des esthétiques et des socialités nouvelles. À l'échelle humaine, dans une rue, un quartier, une ville ou un village, avec qui le souhaite. Pour mettre de la poésie dans nos vies.

Introduction

Je vais vous présenter une démarche de recherche et de création mise en œuvre depuis 2007, dans la région de Bordeaux, au sein de l'association Script que je dirige. Cette association a deux grands secteurs d'activité :

- 1) La création dans le domaine des arts de la scène et des arts visuels — selon des modes de production et de diffusion que l'on peut qualifier de classiques ;
- 2) Le deuxième secteur d'activité relève plus du « hors-piste », avec les artistes qui vont s'impliquer sur le terrain de l'action sociale, de la santé...

J'interviens d'autre part à l'université où je suis maître de conférences dans une formation aux métiers de la culture intitulée « Conception de projet et Médiation artistique et culturelle ».

Le concept de commissariat, tel qu'il est travaillé ici depuis trois jours, condense les différentes fonctions que l'on attribue à la direction artistique ou à la conception de projet, et aussi — mais nous n'en avons pas beaucoup parlé — à la médiation culturelle. Il semble qu'il se passe avec le concept de commissariat la même chose que ce qui s'est passé dans les années 1990 avec le concept de médiation. Souvenons-nous que ce concept de médiation vient des musées — comme le commissariat d'ailleurs. Le commissariat et la médiation sont des concepts migrants.

Le concept de commissariat aux « arts actuels », qui rassemble les arts de la scène et les arts visuels, est un concept *transfrontalier*. Cette notion de transfrontalier était présente dans la quasi totalité des interventions. Pour quel passage de frontière ? Passage de frontière entre les disciplines, les fonctions et les rôles dans le champ professionnel de la culture, entre les genres, les générations, entre l'art et la société... Ainsi, l'usage du concept de commissariat, signale-t-il un désir d'ouverture, d'échange et de partage.

Je reviens maintenant sur le thème qui nous réunit dans cette session : celui du COMMUN. Je vais l'aborder via la notion de FRONTIÈRE. Mon propos sera nourri par une expérience artistique participative dont le but est de **faire œuvre commune de diverses situations de voisinages. Il ne s'agit pas simplement de mettre des œuvres en situation, mais de partir d'une situation pour lui donner une forme artistique, une forme poétique tout en questionnant politiquement la manière dont on génère ces formes.**

Sous le titre « *Appel aux arts mitoyens* » se trouvent désignées :

- ***Une démarche de création*** qui vise à transformer poétiquement ce qui, au quotidien, fait frontière entre des personnes, des communautés, des territoires... Cette démarche est conçue comme un agencement artistique et social de multiples compétences / capacités. Ce terme d'agencement a été beaucoup utilisé, et si l'on a cité plusieurs fois Gilles Deleuze, ce n'est pas par hasard : c'est que le concept d'agencement vient des travaux de Deleuze et Guattari (1980) dans les années 70. Je pense que **le commissariat est une fonction collective qui se construit par agencement.**

- ***L'urgence politique*** à redonner sens à l'action culturelle, dans des démocraties affaiblies par une

tragique crise de confiance des citoyens à l'égard des institutions qui les représentent.

La philosophe Marie José Mondzain (2009) donne une définition très claire pour penser la culture en termes de démocratie:

Penser la culture en termes de démocratie ne consiste pas à réduire les espaces et les temps où s'éprouvent le plaisir et la liberté à une offre spectaculaire de divertissements, ou à une distribution démagogique de valeurs sûres prônant l'accès de tous à une anthologie de « chefs-d'œuvre. Penser la démocratie c'est partir de réalités fondatrices, à savoir que la connaissance et la création ont valeur universelle, que c'est dans ce partage et nulle part ailleurs que se joue l'égalité de tous. Il faut partir de la reconnaissance du droit et de la capacité de chacun, sans distinction, à faire usage de sa sensibilité et de son intelligence. Penser la culture, c'est définir le citoyen, c'est le construire comme sujet de son désir et comme cause de son action. La culture est une éthique qui transforme les relations de voisinage et fait vivre l'altérité dans le plaisir comme dans les conflits. [...] Chacun, là où il est, est en charge de cette politique du voisinage où se règlent à chaque instant l'écart et la proximité, le lien et la déliaison, la concorde et la lutte. (p. 322)

Hier, nous parlions de l'empathie ; la réflexion de Marie José Mondzain (2009) permet de penser de manière un peu dialectique *le proche et le lointain*. Nous avons besoin des deux pour construire nos relations sociales, affectives, familiales, professionnelles... Donc choisir cette voie, celle que dessine la philosophe, c'est substituer une logique des « droits culturels » à celle du « droit à la culture », et, de la sorte, inventer de nouvelles manières d'être les uns avec les autres, pour qu'il y ait du jeu, de la respiration, des échanges, une circulation de sens entre nous. Ainsi nous faut-il concevoir un « être-en-commun » non pas comme une communauté fermée sur elle-même mais comme un mode d'existence ouvert. « Ouvert sur l'avec, ouvert/avec » précise un autre philosophe, Jean-Luc Nancy (2000). « L'ouvert/avec », dit-il, est ce qui fait lien entre le sujet et la société, parce que le sujet n'a d'autre support que ce rapport à un « avec ». Un rapport que Jean-Luc Nancy nomme d'un mot : **un égard**. Égard qui est la marque d'**un être ouvert et ouvrant**. Et le philosophe conclut :

[...] Il faudra sans cesse se méfier des résonances pieuses de « l'ouvert », tout comme de celles de la « communauté ». Ouvert n'est pas simplement ni d'abord générosité, largeur d'accueil et largesse de don, mais c'est principalement la condition de coexistence de singularités finies, entre lesquelles — le long, au bord, sur les limites, entre « dehors » et « dedans » — circule indéfiniment la possibilité de sens. (Nancy, 2000, p. 3-10)

Vous l'aurez compris, le « commun » s'élabore avec ce qui fait bord, limite, frontière. La dialectique de la séparation et de l'association sera donc au cœur de mon propos sur les arts mitoyens, parce que c'est dans l'expérience d'être séparés les uns des autres que prend source le désir de nous associer dans le partage d'une charge commune, celle que représente *la chose mitoyenne*.

1 - Variations sur la notion de frontière pour introduire une définition des arts mitoyens

*« La frontière, c'est la condition épidermique du vivant.
La frontière, c'est le vaccin contre le mur. »*

Regis Debray (2010)

Dans cette 1^{ère} partie, je reviendrai brièvement sur l'histoire du projet en m'expliquant sur les enjeux de la démarche. Pour en savoir plus, je vous invite à lire un article que j'ai écrit sur le sujet «*Attention aux voisins*», publié en 2012 par *l'Observatoire*, la revue des politiques culturelles (Rathier, 2012). Pour l'accompagnement visuel de mon propos, voici le travail de Vincent Monthiers, photographe qui fait partie de l'équipe de réalisation du projet. Il a fait cette proposition à des habitants du quartier : « présentez moi un ami, un voisin ». Avec une petite caméra, il a demandé aux deux personnes de fixer l'objectif, et, ensuite, progressivement, de se tourner l'un vers l'autre, d'envisager la présence de l'autre, se dévisager et se rapprocher... Il a fait ainsi plus de deux cent portraits. Cette vidéo a été projetée dans divers endroits de la ville (dans le hall de l'hôtel de ville de Bègles, dans un théâtre, dans la vitrine d'une pharmacie...).





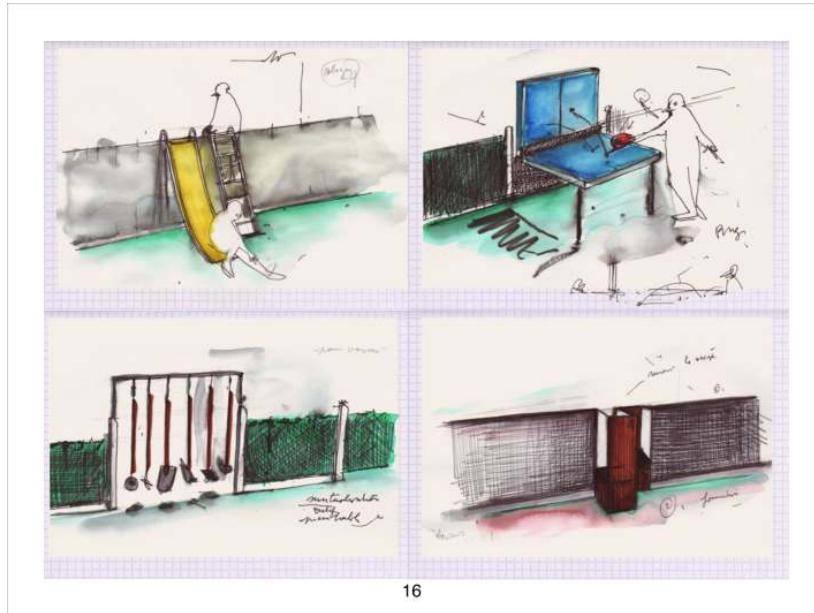
© Vincent Monthiers / Script

Le projet a été préfiguré en 2007 et 2008 à Bègles, commune de la métropole bordelaise, dans la rue où je vis et travaille, l'avenue Salvador Allende. Le titre donné à ce projet était *Les jardins d'à côté*. Notre question était la suivante : Comment transformer des éléments de clôture (mur, palissade, fossé, haie, barrière...) en espaces d'échanges par une médiation artistique afin de mettre en tension l'intime et le social, la sphère privée et l'espace public... ? En travaillant sur ces objets, qui à la fois nous séparent et nous relie à nos voisins, il s'agissait donc de mettre en mouvement nos identités respectives dans la perspective de produire, dans notre quotidien, des esthétiques et des socialités nouvelles.

2 - Trois exemples pour illustrer et questionner la démarche

- Les scénographies conçues par l'artiste Michel Herreria, présentées sous le titre *Clôtures d'échanges*.

Michel Herreria avait fait une série de propositions pour transformer les clôtures. Ces propositions ont été rendues publiques, et certains habitants ont choisi de réaliser telle ou telle scénographie. L'une d'entre-elles, *La conversation*, résume bien l'esprit d'un projet où se mêlent des références à l'*art contextuel* (Ardenne, 2002) et à l'*esthétique relationnelle* (Bourriaud, 1998). L'objet réalisé est certes modeste, mais il est d'une grande force symbolique. Il touche concrètement à une pratique ordinaire du voisinage, et il n'a pas été sans effets dans les échanges quotidiens entre les voisins qui ont participé, avec l'artiste, à la mise en place de cette installation.

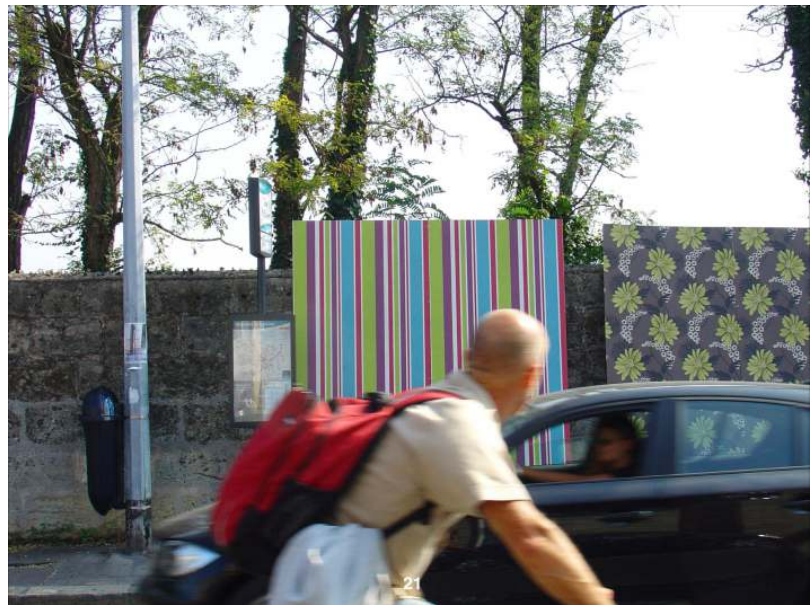




© Michel Herreria / Script

- Les installations éphémères dans la rue proposées par les artistes Philippe Jacques et Karen Gerbier.

Des grands pans de papiers peints adossés aux murs de la ville viennent teinter le paysage urbain d'une touche d'intimité. La présence insolite de l'univers décoratif des pièces de la maison s'invite dans l'espace public. Ces espaces précaires de rencontres inopinées favorisent des conversations légères et spontanées au sujet du voisinage. Ces conversations ont ensuite été mise en forme. Dans ces récits de voisinage, à la limite du privé et du public, de l'intime et du social, il s'agissait d'attraper des petites choses qui font qu'il y a de la perméabilité (*la condition épidermique du vivant*, dont parle Régis Debray, 2010).

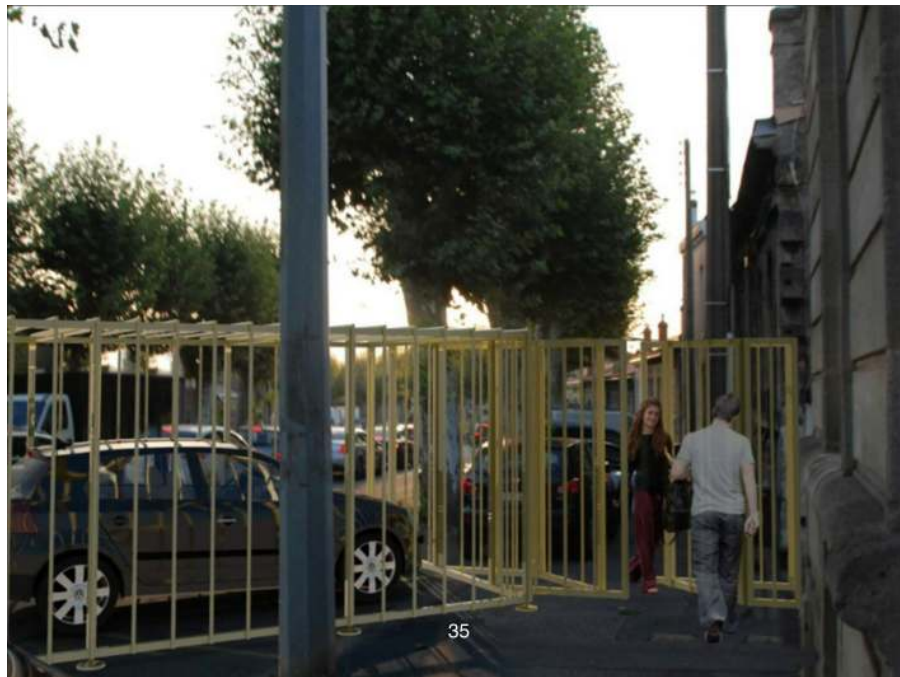
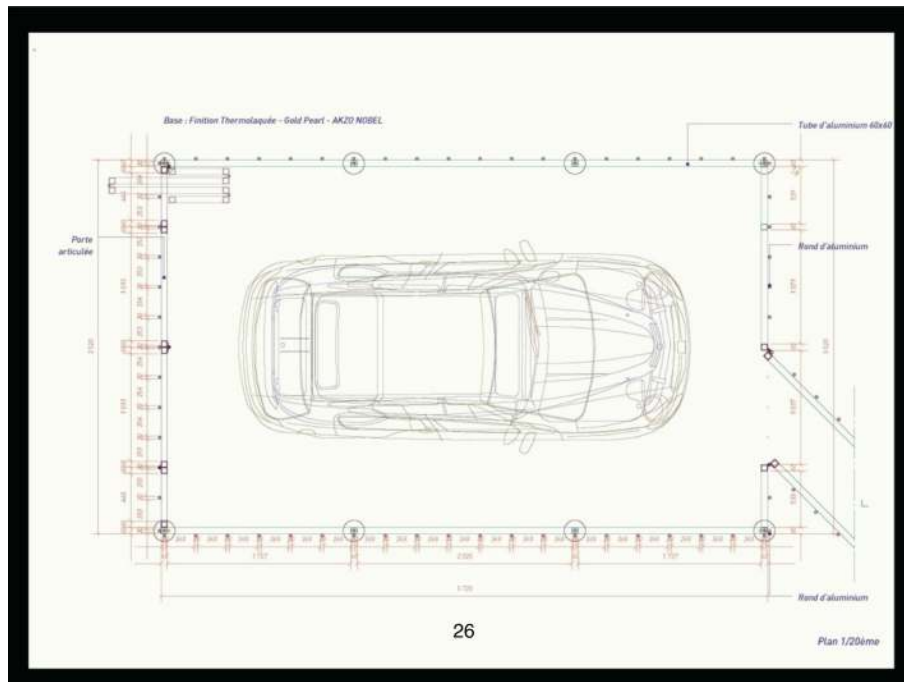


© Association Tout le monde / Script

- La conférence *L'Oiseleur de biens* proposée aux élus et techniciens de la Ville de Bègles (Communauté urbaine de Bordeaux) par Michel Herreria (plasticien) et Fabien Pedelaborde (architecte).

Cette conférence présente un concept de mobilier urbain permettant de sécuriser un bien privé, l'automobile, dans l'espace public. Avec le plus grand sérieux, les deux conférenciers font la promotion de leur produit : son utilité sociale, ses performances techniques, son impact économique, ses qualités esthétiques, ses avantages écologiques, sa pertinence urbaine...

L'auditoire fait ainsi l'expérience d'une imposture, celle du *marketing citoyen*, dans une société d'experts où la notion de bien commun est sans cesse dévoyée. C'est une démonstration par l'absurde des ravages de la rhétorique technicienne.



© M. Herreria & F. Pebelaborde / Script

3 - Quelques éléments de conclusion pour ouvrir la discussion

Dans cette dernière partie, je tenterai de définir cette pratique « poético-politique » caractérisée par différents jeux d'assemblages (humains, institutionnels, esthétiques, sociaux) qui renouvellent notre manière d'envisager les rapports entre art et société, art et existence.

Pour les artistes et les opérateurs culturels, qui font route avec nous, le principal défi est de se dégager de la théorie moderniste de l'autonomie de l'art pour se risquer dans des expérimentations artistiques de la réalité. Ces expérimentations ne peuvent pas prédire la valeur culturelle de telle ou telle pratique. La valeur culturelle se constitue, chemin faisant, au cas par cas, par de multiples interactions. Dans cette *poésie du réel*, où il s'agit d'écrire *avec ce qui nous arrive*, l'expérience artistique ne suscite pas seulement le partage des émotions (ce qui est déjà beaucoup), elle active des situations, elle invite au troc de techniques et d'habiletés, autorise des aveux d'ignorance, encourage les désirs d'apprendre, garantit le respect de chacun dans la confrontation des points de vue. Dans ce mouvement, souvent turbulent, préjugés et faux-semblants partent en vrille, et, parfois, l'horizon se dégage pour oser dire et faire ce qui, jusque-là, semblait hors de portée. Ces audaces dynamisent la vie sociale, parce qu'elles subvertissent des images, des représentations qui font obstacle à la reconnaissance mutuelle. Et là, comme le dit René Char : « Le réel quelquefois désaltère l'espérance. C'est pourquoi, contre toute attente, l'espérance survit » (1962, p. 382).

Les acteurs qui contribuent à cette *clinique culturelle* – des citoyens critiques pourrait-on dire – produisent des savoirs mis en circulation, discutés dans l'espace public. Cette respiration démocratique est précieuse, tant pour les collectivités publiques que pour la société civile. Mais elle peut être menacée par une idéologie utilitariste.

Dans « la société utile », comme il la nommait, Georges Bataille (1989), voyait ainsi le danger :

Chaque homme selon le jugement de la société homogène vaut selon ce qu'il produit, c'est-à-dire qu'il cesse d'être une existence pour soi : il n'est plus qu'une fonction, ordonnée à l'intérieur de limites mesurables, de la production collective (qui constitue une expérience pour autre chose que soi). (p. 137)

Le néo-libéralisme a promu l'utilitarisme dans toutes les sphères de l'activité humaine, y compris celle de la production symbolique. Au point qu'il paraît « naturel » de devoir justifier a priori de l'utilité que pourrait avoir tel acte de création, telle forme de l'action culturelle. Utilité éducative, sociale, économique, thérapeutique... Comme si nous ne parvenions plus à concevoir une valeur de l'art fondée sur la gratuité, la réciprocité. L'art obéit à un principe de nécessité, non d'utilité. Une nécessité qui peut s'éprouver de manière solitaire ou collective. Oublier ce principe peut conduire à des injonctions réduisant l'artiste à une fonction de prestataire. Donc à le priver de sa liberté de création. Disant cela, je ne me fais pas le chantre de l'art contre la culture, à l'instar des avant-gardes du 20^e siècle. Je sais, néanmoins, que tous les artistes n'ont pas nécessairement le désir de se confronter, par leur création, aux univers de l'éducation, du social, de la santé... Ceux-là seraient-ils condamnés à rejoindre les rangs des inutiles de la société ? Certainement pas. D'autres ont une appétence pour les affaires du monde, et vont même jusqu'à se mêler de ce qui ne les regarde pas. Eux-aussi, comme les précédents, n'ont pas abdiqué leur liberté. Les uns comme les autres, par leurs œuvres, leur mode de présence au monde, participent à une activité culturelle susceptible de produire des changements : dans l'existence des personnes, dans les relations sociales... Mais ce type de changement ne se prémédite pas. Il s'observe, s'apprécie dans l'après-coup. Imaginer le contraire serait une aberration.

Si une approche de l'action publique par les droits culturels offre l'opportunité d'une nouvelle alliance entre art, éducation, culture et société, il n'est pas exclu non plus qu'elle puisse donner l'idée à certains politiques de se dédouaner de toute responsabilité en matière de soutien à la création et à la diffusion artistiques.

Pour cela, il leur suffirait de mettre en avant deux arguments. Dire d'abord : « La compétence culturelle de la collectivité sera dorénavant partagée par tous les services ». Ajouter ensuite : « La collectivité ne soutiendra que des projets artistiques et culturels répondant à des critères d'utilité que chaque service établira en fonction de ses missions ». Ce serait alors la porte ouverte au dogmatisme technocratique. Heureusement, nous n'en sommes pas là, grâce à des élus et des techniciens vigilants. Néanmoins, ne négligeons pas le risque d'une telle dérive. Elle est évitable si l'éthique des droits culturels est respectée.

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Site de Script

<http://script-bordeaux.fr/index.html>

Site du Pôle de compétences Culture et Santé en Aquitaine

<http://culture-sante-aquitaine.com/>

29. Are you not entertained? Curating Performance within the Institution

Rie Hovmann Rasmussen

Abstract: In 2003 the critic and curator Jonas Ekeberg introduces the term New Institutionalism in order to explain the development of art institutions around the late 1990s and early 2000s mainly in Europe. On curatorial initiative the institutions had changed from a place of only exhibitions to a focus on production, critical debates as well as dialogue and as a site for research. Expanding programming was an important element in this structure allowing a proliferation of programs and events, where performance played a significant role together with artists in residence, workshops and publications, emphasising an active role of the audience.

With a tendency towards budget cuts following the financial crisis in the late 2000s the situation for art institutions changed. Despite arguments of New Institutionalism as a historical situated concept in a pre-crisis time, many art institutions still resonate with the concept. Due to the economical crisis a corporate turn followed and many institutions we see today navigate between critical and corporate strategies.

This paper investigates these curatorial strategies when presenting performance as an integrated part of programs in art institutions. This paper will argue that presenting performance within such framework calls for a critical approach towards the curatorial strategy as the presentation hybrids as a form of entertainment within the institution. How might curatorial strategies affect the performance practice and what is presented as well as how might this strategy itself entail a specific kind of audience engagement? The paper takes its point of departure from my previous work as curator at Kunsthall Aarhus in Denmark in a time where the institution sought to redefine itself and its expanding programming. Furthermore this paper will focus on a selection of art institutions in Europe when discussing new ways of seeing and presenting performance within the institution.

Introduction

In this paper, I will try to address the role of performance in relation to exhibition programs in art institutions. Despite the fact that there seem to be some agreement that performances presented within the art institutions need to be addressed more critically, there is a lack of in-depth debate on the effect curatorial and institutional strategies have on, for instance, the type of performances presented and the audience engagement in which it entails.

Through the concept of New Institutionalism, I will try and discuss the influence on performance that the development of art institutions have had, as performance is gained a significant role within the last two decades. Though I will mainly address art institutions in Europe, I acknowledge that the discussion also has a role outside this geo-political area.

Furthermore, that the institutional landscape within Europe is not the same due to different economical and political situations of each country.

New Institutionalism

Swedish theorist and curator, Jonas Ekeberg, introduced the term *New Institutionalism* in 2003 in the first issue of the series *Verksted* by Office of Contemporary Art Norway. The term already existed within social science as a way to describe a renewed trust in the effectiveness of institutions after the Second World War, but Ekeberg wanted to give the term new meaning and instead referring to an experimental art institution (Kolb & Flückiger, 2014, p. 20). Ekeberg tried to identify the curatorial, educational and artistic practices around the late 1990s and early 2000s that had changed the way art institutions operate. The concept followed the rise of the independent curator in the 1990s, introducing unorthodox curatorial practices as they themselves entered the institutions (Doherty, 2004, p. 3).

This curatorial development within art institutions opened up towards criticism and debate of the institution itself, critically engaging with not only the content of the exhibitions, but also the communication and its form (Ekeberg, 2003, p. 13). With this development, institutional critique as we know it from the 1970s up to the 1990s, with artist such as Andrea Fraser, Fred Wilson, and Hans Haacke, was internalised by the institutions. The art institution now functioned as a place for production, critical debates and dialogue as well as a site for research. Within this structure expanding programming was key in order to open up for dialogue and participation, allowing a proliferation of programs and events, such as artists in residence, talks, workshops, publications and, of specific interest to this paper, performances (Ekeberg, 2003, p. 11). As some of the examples of New Institutionalism Ekeberg pointed towards the work at Rooseum Center for Contemporary Art in Malmö with Charles Esche as Director in the early 2000s and Palais de Tokyo in Paris with initiatives by Nicolas Bourriaud and Jérôme Sans. Here these director-curators experimented with the role of the institution parallel to an experimental contemporary art practice (Ekeberg, 2003, p. 9-10).

With tendencies towards budget cuts following the economical crisis in 2008, the situation for art institutions changed and this had its effect on the structure of institutions; while

some emerged to become bigger institutions, others simply closed.¹ Additionally the lack of support to experimental institutional initiative was also affected by the gradual turn towards neoliberal or populist cultural policies in Europe in general that went against institutions influenced by leftist politics (Kolb & Flückiger, 2014, p. 22). Despite arguments of New Institutionalism as over, and connecting it only to a specific historical situation around the millennium, curatorial strategies in many institutions today clearly still resonate with the concept as how to think programs within the art institution.

Following the economical crisis we have additionally seen a corporate turn in these institutions and consequently many institutions today navigate between critical and corporate strategies. This corporate turn is most obviously seen in bigger institutions, but is more and more common also for smaller institutions, where expanding programming also serve the purpose of attracting a larger audience. In addition there is a focus on showing temporal exhibitions and many events that perform a sense of economic growth as an element in legitimising their existence to funders, policy makers and taxpayers (Dimitrakaki & Perry, 2013, p. 10).

Performance within the institution

With the slightly passive aggressive title *Are you not entertained?*, my initial concern with the function of performance within today's art institution can be no secret. Art institutions run as corporations have been emphasised as problematic on many occasions by theorists, curators and artists stressing the possible effects it might have on various aspects of the art presented.² With a rising number of different performances, from performance art to dance and music performances, presented within the institutions today despite financial crisis, it seems of significant importance to look at the strategies behind the use of performance. Alongside this increasing interest, we have even seen in the bigger institutions performance being instrumentalised into entire departments or specific dedicated spaces such as Tate Modern's *The Tanks: Art in Action*.

Of course this interest in showing performance along side the exhibitions also emphasises an effort to give actions value within institutions that have historically only been assigned to objects. Yet what may be noticeable is the terminology used for the programs that present

performances, as I in this paper refer to as 'expanding programming' borrowed by Jens Hoffmann (2010), but may also be referred to as 'additional program' or 'event program'. These programs exist outside the core program, which may have the effect of still keeping performance at the outskirts of 'real art' and allowing different values to be assigned to different types of artistic practices.

Furthermore, this increased interest in performances presented within the institution opens up for the question: what kind of performance practices does this navigation between the desire to present performance and the need to comply with corporate strategies encourage? No doubt that there are many performances that may comply with these structures, and are no less than the one's that don't, but it is noticeable that despite a great interest in curatorial and institutional reflection on exhibitions, communications and formats, there seem to be very few critical discussions on the role and curating of performance within the art institution.

In the spring of 2012 I, together with the staff and the newly appointed artistic directors at Kunsthall Aarhus in Denmark, started to work on the artistic program for 2013-2014, *Systemic Series*. The program not only sought to change the previous ways of exhibiting at the institution, but also tried to rethink it as a place for transdisciplinary and critical practices encouraging exchange and participation. Despite the fact that the term New Institutionalism was never directly addressed, nor denied, it is in many ways clear that the way of thinking the institution were echoing the institutional ideas of the late 1990s and early 2000s as described by Jonas Ekeberg (2003). Likewise the program focused on transparency and criticality, not only as a part of the artistic practice, but also as reflection of the curatorial and institution itself.

In *Systemic Series* performance played a significant role as it served the focus on a broad span of artistic practices; activating the exhibitions; and allowing artists to become more accessible for audiences; as well as functioning as an attraction for the program and the institution. Additionally performances were discussed in terms of exclusiveness and spectacle to emphasise what the institution can perform.

Like many other programs of art institutions today, it was impossible to think of the program without integrating performance. Following this inclusion one of the more popular strategies are to present performances at opening nights. This curatorial strategy might serve the purpose of securing audiences for the performance, avoiding smaller numbers or no audience at all, but the structure of the opening entails a specific kind of audience engagement as well. Openings of exhibitions are the spectacle of revelation, where the audiences are invited to view the exhibition for the first time. It is as much a social and networking event for artists, art professionals and the institution as such, where the exhibition itself serves as an environment, which enables this specific kind of professional exchange. Performances presented within this environment therefore often serve as a slight interruption. Only some performances are suited for this kind of environment. This is determined by the structure of the performance that needs to comply with the format of the opening. Often easily accessible in terms of length is preferred, allowing the audience to return to their conversations within a reasonable time. The audiences are left to experience the performances as 'not too' disruptive, maybe even as a form of entertainment.

At the conference *Is the Living Body the Last Thing Alive? The New Performance Turn, it's histories and its institutions*, held at Para-site in Hong Kong, in April, 2014, the importance of the living body in the institutional space was emphasised and referred to it as 'the performance turn', echoing previous acknowledgements of change in contemporary art discourses like 'the curatorial turn' and 'the educational turn'. At the conference the cultural critic and theorist Boris Buden stressed how this performance turn should also been seen in relation to a shift in the cultural condition with an increased focus on experience economy, where stage experiences by performances serves as a way to orchestrate memorable products (Buden, 2014). It is worth questioning which type of artistic value this curatorial strategy might assign performance practices, when it becomes means of attracting and satisfying audiences at openings. Further that using performance to serve audiences, positions the audience on the other side of a form of commercial transaction and might in worse case alienate the audience from the critical perspective of performance practices as such (Proctor, 2013, p. 56-57).

Performances are, of course, not only shown at openings, it is also common amongst many art institutions to present them during specific event nights, at conferences or talks, or as a part of residencies and workshops. The expanding program at most institutions may be stretched or divided over the period of an exhibition, which allows more diverse performance practices to be presented as well.

One of the tendencies in performance practices, that may be seen as encouraged by institutions today, is that of 'delegated performances', as described by curator and researcher Claire Bishop (2012). The term identifies performance practices where non-professionals or specialists in other fields are hired to present the work to the public, but differ from theatre and cinema tradition by hiring performers to act on behalf of the artist (Bishop, 2012, p. 219). It is a practice that perhaps should also be seen in relation to the increasing interest in dance and choreography within the art institution. Most notorious within this practice in the art scene today is Tino Sehgal, whose work is being shown in many of art institutions and biennales, like Tate Modern, Kunstverein Hamburg, Magasin 3 in Stockholm and recently at Venice Biennale and Documenta 13 in Kassel. Likewise renowned artists such as Tania Bruguera, Martin Creed and Spartacus Chetwynd have also presented what could be referred to as delegated performances.

Delegated performances can constantly be repeated when relying on a collective body and no longer only the body of the artist. This may have had the effect of accelerating the institutionalism of performance and may furthermore have facilitated its collectability (Bishop, 2012, p. 224). At the same time this interest in presenting delegated performances can perhaps also be seen as a way of moving away from presenting documentation of performance. Strategies that may be more desirable for curators and institutions as a way to also attract audiences by promising the spectacle and 'presentness' of the performance.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that at the same time this collectability and possible repetitiveness of these types of performance practices also plays a role in attempting to give value to performances on the same level as the object orientated practices. When insisting on the length of the performances to comply with the length of the exhibitions itself, the performances

are at the same time also attempting to move outside the concept of the spectacle and as a form of short entertainment.

With the current interest in presenting performances, there seem to be a move away from showing documentation of performances, which may give away to boredom, passiveness and sense of absence. Performances that can be in some way repeated seem to be of specific interest and have affected the way performances are viewed within art institutions. Here artists are often encouraged to perform their own work on several occasions. Not to be confused with re-enactments that was popular around the early 2000s, which critically explores memory and previous experience, but rather as a way of redoing same performances for different audiences and in different institutional settings. As when Joan Jonas performs her work *Reanimation* at Performa in New York, Documenta 13 in Kassel, and Bildmuseet in Umeå, Sweden.

We, the institution

The popularity of performance is not only seen within well-established art institutions, but also an increased amount of alternative art spaces and events dedicated to the presentation of performance has spread significantly. Some of these alternative initiatives like Lilith Performance Studio in Malmö and Performance Space in London have been created as a critique and attempt to work differently with performances than that of the art institutions. With their critique they also highlight some of the problems with the current presentation of performance, as for example the constant need to produce performances, the lack of production time, or the narrow type of performances presented.

What might be interesting with these alternative spaces is how they dare to consider breaking with the current privatization and corporate strategies and the effect it has on the role of performance. Echoing in many ways the plea curator and lecturer Nina Möntmann (2009) had to art institutions in her essay *The Rise and Fall of New Institutionalism* to orientate themselves towards other “areas besides the corporative business of globalized capitalism” (p. 157).

Regardless of my concern with the function of performance within art institution, I am by far ready to reject the art institutions as a place for exploring performance. Rather I would say

that the responsibility is on all of us to think differently on the presentation of performance, for as Andrea Fraser (2005) states: “It is not a question of being against the institution: We are the institution. It’s a question of what kind of institution we are, what kind of values we institutionalise, what forms of practice we reward, and what kind of rewards we aspire to” (p. 105).

¹ For example Rooseum Center for Contemporary Art became a branch of the expanding Moderna Museet in Stockholm, while Museum of Contemporary Art in Oslo emerged with other national museums in Oslo under the national Museum of Contemporary Art, Architecture and Design.

² Amongst the critics are artist Hito Steyerl; curator and critic Nina Möntmann; and curator and researcher Claire Doherty.

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Acknowledgement

This research was kindly supported by the Danish Arts Foundation.

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30. L'œuvre du commissariat : histoires et expériences de l'événement chez Tino Sehgal.

Véronique Hudon – doctorante à l'UQAM (Québec)

Résumé : Les œuvres *Kiss* et *This Situation* de Tino Sehgal, présentées au Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal au printemps 2012, proposent un travail sur la durée hors du commun. Ces deux œuvres sont de véritables événements performatifs – circonscrites dans un espace et un temps donné, elles sont des expériences à vivre. Ces événements, qui ne sont pas constitués d'un médium exclusif, ne correspondent pas aux cadres disciplinaires de l'histoire de l'art traditionnelle.

À la jonction des arts vivants et des arts visuels, la prise en charge critique de cette pratique complexe pose de nouveaux défis aux commissaires et à qui veut penser la mémoire de ces œuvres. Peut-être l'heure est-elle venue de penser à nouveaux frais une histoire de l'art qui serait, au sens fort, événementielle. En effet, comment le commissariat peut-il rendre compte de ce partage d'expériences à la fois individuelles et collectives ? De quelles manières l'événement peut-il être pris en charge par le discours sur les arts ? Quelles formes de médiatisation sont-elles impliquées (témoignages, récits, archives) ? Je propose d'approfondir les différents enjeux narratifs de l'événement à travers ces deux œuvres performatives exemplaires *Kiss* et *This Situation*.

J'entends inscrire la démarche et la pratique de Tino Sehgal en filiation avec certaines pratiques, telles que l'Internationale Situationniste ou encore les cessions des « zones de sensibilité picturale immatérielle » par Yves Klein. C'est à la lumière de cette histoire que je mettrai en perspectives les enjeux politiques et esthétiques de ces œuvres. De même, je prendrai en considération l'histoire de l'œuvre en train de se faire, en tenant compte des processus de création et de productions en amont de l'œuvre, mais aussi des modes d'action et des formes de médiatisation des œuvres étudiées, bref leur déploiement dans l'espace et le temps. Enfin, le spectateur occupe une grande place au sein de ces espaces événementiels, il y est un interprète actif constituant son propre récit. Il revient au commissaire de rendre compte de ces différentes couches de narrativités : du récit de création à l'inscription historique, de sa médiatisation dans la collectivité jusqu'à l'expérience individuelle du spectateur.

Au printemps 2013, l'artiste Tino Sehgal présentait au Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal deux œuvres qui posent un certain nombre de défis aux pratiques curatoriales traditionnelles. La première de ces œuvres, qui date de 2002 et qui s'intitule *Kiss* — c'est-à-dire « baiser » —, met en scène un couple qui réinterprète en boucle, dans une séquence minutieusement chorégraphiée de huit minutes, des baisers célèbres dans l'histoire de l'art. La deuxième œuvre, qui date de 2007 et qui s'intitule *This Situation* — « cette situation » — est plutôt fondée sur le discours et l'échange : les interprètes sont là pour discuter : ils échangent entre eux et avec les visiteurs en convoquant des citations sur un certain nombre d'enjeux qui traversent les cinq derniers siècles de la pensée humaine — de la philosophie à l'économie en

passant par l'esthétique et la politique, les interprètes discutent tour à tour comme s'ils tenaient là un salon plus ou moins anachronique. Toutefois, les échanges sont ponctués de règles non dites que les « joueurs »¹ appliquent et qui rythment physiquement et verbalement les échanges, par exemple, chaque visiteur qui entre dans l'espace est salué par un « Welcome to this situation ».

Devant de telles formes, qui se situe à mi-chemin entre l'installation et la performance, on pourrait d'entrée de jeu se poser une question toute simple et en apparence bien naïve : où est l'œuvre ? Bien sûr, toute l'histoire de l'art du dernier siècle nous a habitués à une progressive disparition de l'objet — de l'œuvre comme objet —, bouleversant sans relâche le statut ontologique de l'œuvre de l'art, de telle sorte qu'on sait bien aujourd'hui que l'œuvre ne tient pas sagement à l'intérieur d'un cadre qu'on peut tranquillement installer aux murs des musées. Il reste que dans leur façon de valoriser une expérience par essence immatérielle — au détriment d'un objet fixe ou matériellement persistant dans le temps — les propositions artistiques de Tino Sehgal, qui se présentent comme des situations à vivre, ont de quoi surprendre les critiques les plus aguerris. Plus encore, et c'est là un élément essentiel pour ce que je vais essayer d'avancer ici, l'artiste interdit toute documentation : en amont et en aval, aucune trace matérielle de ces œuvres ne peut subsister, et cela est très clair jusque dans les dispositions légales qui régissent ou qui encadrent la présentation des œuvres par les musées. Il n'y a ici aucun contrat papier : la transaction entre l'institution et l'artiste (ou encore les représentants de l'artiste) doit se faire oralement, devant notaire, et aucune trace matérielle ne subsiste même de cette opération — c'est dire à quel point Tino Sehgal va loin dans sa façon de court-circuiter toute existence matérielle de l'œuvre d'art. Bref, l'œuvre est ici radicalement immatérielle : rien ne subsiste, aucune trace, aucun contrat — rien ne peut témoigner même de son existence si ce n'est les récits des interprètes et spectateurs qui en ont fait l'expérience.

Michel Gauthier, critique d'art et conservateur qui s'est notamment penché sur la question du degré zéro de l'art, affirme que les œuvres de Tino Sehgal appartiennent aux pratiques artistiques dont « le mode d'existence est factuel, événementiel » ; pour lui il « ne s'agit pas d'une œuvre qui consiste en une chose, en un objet, au sens courant des deux mots, mais d'un événement, d'une action qui se déroule » (Gauthier, 2007, p. 17-18). Au regard de quelles pratiques artistiques est-il possible de définir l'événement chez Sehgal ? Les « situations construites » de l'Internationale Situationniste, la « sculpture sociale » de Joseph Beuys, le « Total Art » et le *happening* d'Allan Kaprow, l'action collage des

Actioniste Viennois : la forme événementielle a une riche histoire XXe siècle. C'est une forme qui doit être comprise dans le sillon des expérimentations et des recherches menées par les avant-gardes (et les néo avant-gardes américaines), qui ont bouleversé les codes de la représentation, tels le *ready-made*, la performance ou encore le *happening*, et connues sous des dénominations variées (souvent connotées à des artistes ou groupements historiques). L'attrait pour les pratiques événementielles est motivé par le fait que chaque événement est unique, il ne peut être reproduit et matériellement contenu, mais aussi par le fait que l'événement entretient un lien de contiguïté avec le réel. L'ensemble de ces démarches visait à bousculer les modes de production et réception traditionnelles du champ artistique (classique et moderne). Ce qui a intéressé nombre d'artistes œuvrant dans le champ de la performance ou touchant à ce qui a trait à l'événementiel, c'est bien un certain rapprochement de l'art et de la vie, une volonté d'inscrire l'art dans le « réel » qui est au cœur de plusieurs projets des avant-gardes (Internationale Situationniste, Fluxus). En effet, l'événement permet un travail sur l'espace matériel qui s'éloigne d'une représentation illusionniste ou de la mise à distance du réel. En opposition avec l'autonomie de la sphère artistique, ces pratiques revendiquent leur inscription dans le réel et s'inscrivent dans des projets politiques. Il faut sortir la peinture du tableau ou encore transporter les artistes hors de la scène, il faut sortir l'art de son cadre traditionnel.

Sehgal quant à lui emploie l'expression « situations construites » pour définir le plus justement possible le travail qu'il propose. Cette appellation n'est pas sans rappeler l'Internationale Situationniste, courant artistique révolutionnaire qui a eu cours en France dans les années soixante, dont le texte fondateur de Guy Debord, *Rapport sur la construction des situations et sur les conditions de l'organisation et de l'action de la tendance situationniste internationale*, laisse comprendre l'importance de cette notion :

Notre idée centrale est celle de situations, c'est-à-dire la construction concrète d'ambiances momentanées de la vie, et leur transformation en une qualité passionnelle supérieure. Nous devons mettre au point deux grandes composantes en perpétuelles interactions : le décor matériel de la vie ; les comportements qu'il entraîne et qui bouleversent. (Berréby, 2004, p 16)

Au centre de cette démarche c'est bien un rapprochement de la vie et de l'art qui est souhaité : l'événement permettrait à l'art d'intervenir au sein du « réel » tout en permettant une intensification de l'expérience vécue. Ce qu'implique aussi la situation, c'est un décentrement du regard du spectateur, il n'y a pas dans ces œuvres un point de vue unique structurant l'œuvre. En effet, la situation confère une place centrale au spectateur, puisque seule sa présence permet l'activation de la situation, elle travaille aussi à rendre plus invisible matériellement l'œuvre, puisque son cadre est la vie même. Toutefois, à bien

des égards la pratique de Sehgal s'éloigne de certaines idéologies des avant-gardes, elle ne cherche pas une fusion totale entre l'art et la vie, recherche à laquelle grand nombre d'artistes ont renoncé, puisque le projet politique des avants-gardes a échoué, puisque la fusion de l'art et de la vie coïnciderait aussi avec la fin de l'art dans la mesure où il ne serait plus possible de les distinguer. Sehgal semble plutôt vouloir transcender le cadre institutionnel de l'art en jouant les règles autrement. En ce sens, la dématérialisation de son travail s'inscrit en filiation avec les démarches conceptuelles, notamment par sa résistance à toute typologie précise et à toute définition restrictive. De même, il interroge la réalité de l'art même, remettant en question le statut traditionnel de l'objet d'art comme l'ont fait un bon nombre d'artistes conceptuels avant lui. En ce sens, la vente d'une œuvre immatérielle s'inscrit aussi dans une certaine tradition d'artistes conceptuels, dont Yves Klein est sans doute l'un des pionniers avec les cessions de *zone sensibilité picturale immatérielle*. Toutefois, Yves Klein contrairement à Sehgal ne résiste pas à la documentation de ces cessions qui sont pour lui des rituels qu'il documente, bien que l'acheteur doit brûler le reçu « pour que la valeur fondamentale immatérielle de la zone lui appartienne définitivement et fasse corps avec lui » (Riout, 2004), ce qu'indique Yves Klein en 1959 dans son texte intitulé *Règles rituelles de la cession des zones de sensibilité picturale immatérielle*. Enfin, l'originalité de la démarche de Tino Sehgal réside justement dans la radicalité de son geste qui vise à éradiquer tout document matériel archivable de l'œuvre.

Toutefois, l'enjeu est peut-être aussi ailleurs comme j'essaierai de le démontrer, puisque ce geste éclaire d'une manière paradoxale la vie discursive de ces œuvres. En effet, c'est bien les récits et témoignages fondés sur l'expérience vécue qui vont prendre le relais de « ce qui a eu lieu », ses témoignages se situent nécessairement dans un après-coup, en bordure de l'œuvre, mais dans le cas de Sehgal, ils constituent les principaux moyens de pérennisation. En ce sens, mes analyses vont porter aussi sur les marges de l'œuvre qui renvoient au terme de « parergon » en tant que supplément qui délimite, cadre et borde l'œuvre. Pour Derrida, le *parergon* est ce qu'il faut pour donner lieu à l'œuvre et ce qui permet de déployer son énergie (*contre ce qui manque en elle*) (Derrida, p. 63-64). Il en résulte une double logique : d'une part, le *parergon*² fixe l'œuvre, d'autre part, il la met en mouvement. Je propose ici d'essayer de voir de quelles manières les modes de production et les modalités d'existences des œuvres de Sehgal conditionnent en partie le contenu discursif autour de ces œuvres. Puisque l'événement qui échappe à toute documentation donne inévitablement une place prégnante au discours qui ici passe par une mise en récit des différents intervenants.

Le travail de Sehgal résiste à toute forme de transmission matérielle, de dénotation, de description, ce qui fait que son travail s'articule autour de la mémoire orale et corporelle. Son

interdiction n'a pas comme simple but d'empêcher toute documentation a posteriori des présentations, mais implique aussi que la production de l'œuvre passe par une transmission directe entre l'artiste et les collaborateurs-interprètes. Pour ce faire, Sehgal met en marche différentes stratégies, mais l'une des particularités de son travail, c'est que l'œuvre dans son entièreté repose sur sa capacité à générer des modes d'échanges et de transmissions. C'est-à-dire que les processus mêmes de production de l'œuvre se fondent sur la médiation de l'œuvre immatérielle. Dans le cadre de *Kiss*, la médiation se fait de l'artiste (ou encore d'un collaborateur désigné par Sehgal : Asad Raza à Montréal) aux interprètes, mais aussi des interprètes à d'autres interprètes. Par exemple, *Kiss* est transmissible d'un danseur à l'autre, un danseur peut devenir dépositaire de la pièce (chorégraphie) et la transmettre à d'autres danseurs. Les œuvres forment aussi souvent des séries, dont il y a plusieurs « exemplaires » dans le monde et les institutions qui en font l'acquisition peuvent consentir à prêter l'œuvre à un tiers. Ce qui permet aussi à la même œuvre d'être diffusée un peu partout à travers le monde. Les modalités de transmission varient aussi d'un œuvre à l'autre, en ce sens, dans *This Situation* les « joueurs » comme les nomme Sehgal, sont sélectionnés dans la ville d'accueil : Sehgal choisit des personnes représentatives de la vie intellectuelle de la ville, qui seront principalement des interlocuteurs en mesure d'alimenter la discussion.³ Ainsi, l'échange se constitue avec une microcommunauté locale, cette communauté est un élément crucial de l'œuvre qui est basé sur un jeu de discussion. La survie de l'œuvre repose sur une communauté et leur capacité à transmettre et à mémoriser la chorégraphie. Les différents intervenants deviennent des acteurs essentiels pour que l'œuvre ait lieu, cette communauté assure une part de l'existence de l'œuvre, mais les différents acteurs institutionnels sont aussi engagés tout comme les visiteurs.

En faisant de la communauté un élément essentiel à l'existence de son œuvre, Sehgal palie déjà en partie à l'absence de la documentation et d'un appareillage critique généré par l'institution d'accueil. En effet, les interprètes qu'ils soient danseurs ou joueurs deviennent la mémoire vivante de l'œuvre, ils assurent en partie la conservation de cette dernière. De même, leurs témoignages participent aussi aux échanges et commentaires, en divers lieux et occasions : échanges organisés par le musée, témoignage de leur expérience sur le web ou encore simples échanges impromptus avec les visiteurs hors de l'exposition. Sehgal contraint aussi les acteurs institutionnels à s'engager, puisqu'ils doivent se plier à plusieurs règles qui touchent à la

conservation et à la présentation de l'exposition. Rappelons que Sehgal interdit toute documentation, il contrôle aussi les différentes modalités d'exposition et de diffusion. Le mandat de faire respecter l'interdiction est tout simplement une autre facette de la partition de la pièce, de sa mise en scène, qui amène un réseau illimité de gardiens, de professionnels du musée, de journalistes et de visiteurs ordinaires à jouer les règles de son jeu.⁴ En ce sens, les intervenants de l'institution deviennent aussi des acteurs au sein de l'œuvre, les conservateurs et commissaires doivent appliquer les règles déterminées par l'artiste qui touche à leur champ d'activités. Ils sont aussi les participants privilégiés à la cession de l'œuvre qui est orchestrée selon un protocole : il s'agit d'une cession orale en présence de personnes clefs. En effet, l'acquisition d'une situation construite de Tino Sehgal est validée par une énonciation orale et par la présence de témoins. Puisque Tino Sehgal refuse que l'acquisition s'appuie sur une documentation (qui est en théorie nécessaire à la muséalisation) et qu'il ne produit aucun certificat, comme l'ont fait par ailleurs plusieurs artistes conceptuels avant lui. Enfin, c'est Sehgal qui définit les termes du protocole de cession du droit de réitération, ainsi cette transaction participe pleinement à la proposition artistique. Elle s'inscrit à la suite de démarches artistiques dont l'une des plus célèbres est sans doute celle d'Yves Klein évoqué plus tôt. En effet, la transaction suscite de l'intérêt puisqu'elle est perçue comme un « moment » qui participe à l'œuvre. Ainsi, la plupart des institutions vont créer en parallèle à l'exposition des échanges sur le sujet et livrer leur témoignage ou encore diffuser des informations à ce sujet sur le web (comme ce fût le cas au Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal). La transaction même fait événement et attire l'attention de nombreux journalistes ou commentateurs, positivement ou négativement. À titre d'exemple, voici une partie du récit qu'en fait Marie Muracciole qui rapporte son expérience dans *Les Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne* :

[...] Comme Sehgal en a décidé une fois pour toutes, la transaction était orale. Affranchie de **toute trace écrite** ou **autre représentation**, la cession est tangible au terme de son énonciation par le galeriste ou l'artiste est validée par la présence des témoins [...]. Les informations données sont le titre de l'œuvre, sa date, son prix, auxquelles s'ajoute l'autorisation faite du collectionneur d'exécuter la pièce. Suit l'exigence que ce collectionneur ne consente à **aucune matérialisation ni diffusion de la pièce sous forme d'image ou de descriptif imprimé**, puis les conditions de la cession possible, c'est-à-dire le contrat oral équivalent qui permettra à la pièce de passer à un nouvel acquéreur. (Muracciole, 2007, p. 42)

Ainsi, on constate que le témoignage est le principal mode de description de l'œuvre et qu'il touche différents modes d'actions de cette dernière se trouvant aussi en transparence avec l'institution. Les institutions quant à elles vont respecter toutes un peu différemment les règles, mais la plupart vont se livrer à certaines interprétations minimales de l'œuvre passant principalement par le verbe (AGO, 2006, 2010; Fondation Nicola Trussardi, 2008; Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 2012; MCA, 2007). Ainsi, l'enjeu du pouvoir entre l'artiste et l'institution est au centre de cette œuvre. En effet, Tino Sehgal s'arroge en grande partie le rôle de commissaire/conservateur, puisque son œuvre prend en compte les modalités d'exposition et de conservation. Il crée une situation qui implique l'ensemble de l'institution qu'il met en scène. Il exploite le contexte de l'exposition comme matériau au même titre que la toile ou la peinture, le lieu d'exposition devient un lieu de spéculation sur la représentation de la réalité elle-même, la réalité du système de l'art. Par la « réglementation » du travail discursif pratiqué par l'institution culturelle, Sehgal met d'une manière paradoxale en évidence le fonctionnement discursif du système de l'art se structurant autour de règles. Il démontre en quelque sorte que l'on peut rejouer ou recomposer notre manière d'instituer l'art et qu'au fond l'art n'est peut-être qu'un jeu dont on peut revoir les structures, les codes et les fonctions.

Ainsi, l'institution est le véritable cadre de l'œuvre et la situation contraint chacun à y jouer un rôle. En ce sens, il faut remarquer qu'il n'y a pas de cadres matériels qui entourent les « performances » et qu'il n'y a rien qui nous laisse croire que l'œuvre *Kiss* se trouve devant nous, la signalétique habituelle au musée — cadre, socle, cartel — est effacée selon les règles de Sehgal, il n'y a rien non plus qui en appelle aux codifications propre aux arts de la scène — scène, fermeture des lumières, boîte noire. Bref, les rituels habituels qui encadrent la présentation ou la représentation d'œuvres afin d'orienter le visiteur ou le spectateur dans son expérience sont ici absents. D'ailleurs, l'œuvre peut tout aussi bien se trouver derrière nous ou juste à côté, elle se déplace, elle provoque des interactions. L'œuvre est partout, elle est situation ce qui la rend d'une certaine manière transparente, « invisible » diront certains. Cette difficulté à encadrer l'œuvre, à isoler la représentation artistique dans une sphère autonome plus clairement détachée du contexte d'exposition, participe à un brouillage entre ce qui appartient à l'art et au réel. L'œuvre se situe de manière transparente dans l'institution, elle expose de telle sorte l'espace institutionnel. Il demeure que l'œuvre a un cadre, il déborde, il englobe l'ensemble d'une

situation qui elle-même se déploie dans le temps et l'espace, et dont les limites sont difficiles à définir. D'autant plus que la mobilité fait partie aussi de son mode d'existence, puisqu'elle peut être réitérée et prêtée par l'acquéreur, en plus, il existe souvent plusieurs exemplaires de l'œuvre. L'action des interprètes se produit dans un lieu, le musée, ce cadre même donne du sens à leurs actions et à l'ensemble de la proposition artistique de Sehgal. En ce sens, Nathalie Desmet, critique d'art qui s'intéresse aux expositions vides, dit des travaux de Sehgal qu'ils « appartiennent au musée » : « Son propos vise à créer un autre type de relation avec le spectateur au sein même de l'institution et d'aller contre la production objectale pour s'intéresser à une autre sorte de production qui s'inscrirait dans une logique de déproduction. » (Desmet, 2009, p. 91). Le musée ou la galerie comme cadre sous-tend un ensemble d'activités de conservation, de communication, mais ces institutions sont aussi structurées par des règles, plus ou moins explicites. Ces règles sont fondées sur des valeurs associées traditionnellement à l'œuvre d'art d'où découlent des méthodologies dominantes : la permanence de l'œuvre, le savoir-faire de l'artiste et l'autonomie du champ artistique. Sehgal rejoue les règles autrement et redistribue le pouvoir : s'ingérant dans les activités propres à l'institution, mais aussi en donnant aux interprètes/collaborateurs et aux spectateurs, une plus grande responsabilité face à l'œuvre, face à sa pérennisation, mais aussi face à son histoire. L'intentionnalité de l'artiste n'est pas explicite, ni marquée dans la matière, en effet, il est très difficile d'énoncer avec certitude qu'elle est l'intention précise de l'artiste, si ce n'est lors d'entretiens, de témoignages et d'échanges qui demeurent toujours relayés par un tiers, jamais totalement à l'abri de l'interprétation. Toutefois, des analyses convergent, par exemple, *This Situation* est souvent envisagé en tant que « salon contemporain », certains témoignages nous laissent savoir que ce serait Sehgal, lui-même qui l'envisage de cette façon, tel le témoignage de David Rothenberg qui rend compte de ses échanges avec Sehgal comme suit :

This past October I received a strange message from a name I did not know, Tino Sehgal. He told me he was organizing an event at the Marion Goodman Gallery, a prestigious space in midtown New York, which would be comprised of a group of philosophers and theorists discussing the state of our society, technology, relationships, and the future. 'It is difficult to explain,' he wrote me, 'except in person, but for now I will say the closest thing to what I have in mind is a formalized version of the nineteenth century salon, where people would gather to have serious conversations in their homes, making rigorous intellectual discussion a part of social life'. (Rothenberg, 2008)

On remarque la prudence de l'artiste dans ce qui serait aux dires de David Rothenberg un courriel de Tino Sehgal. En fait, l'artiste amène, les visiteurs, les interprètes et l'ensemble des acteurs institutionnels à réévaluer ce qui donne sa valeur à une œuvre artistique. Ainsi, Tino Sehgal se livre à un jeu avec les « marqueurs » de l'art, les bornes spatiales, temporelles de l'œuvre d'art, les matériaux de l'éphémère, tel le corps.

Au cœur de ce jeu se trouve le visiteur. En effet, l'œuvre crée une situation dans laquelle le visiteur est en immersion, il doit l'être pour accéder pleinement à cette dernière. Telle semble être l'injonction de Sehgal en valorisant comme seul mode de présentation l'expérience directe. L'originalité de la situation réside dans le fait qu'elle est pensée à partir de la perspective du spectateur. Dans un environnement immersif, il n'y a pas une position théorique du regardeur ou un emplacement « idéal » comme au sein du tableau. L'immersion se rapporte au monde primaire qui ne fait pas de distinctions entre l'objet et le sujet de l'expérience. Ainsi, la perspective n'est plus limitée à une image et à la vision, elle prend forme à travers différentes relations qu'elle construit : relations optiques, relations de distances et d'échelles, relations topologiques et chronologiques, relations événementielles et performatives. Dès lors chaque visiteur devient l'interprète de la situation, il doit procéder à une lecture de ce qui a lieu. L'interprétation qu'il donnera sera en relation avec son expérience immédiate, elle-même en relation avec l'ensemble des règles qui définissent l'apparition, l'action et l'évolution de *This Situation* ou de *Kiss*. Le travail de réception exige des procédures de lecture et d'interprétations de son expérience de l'œuvre en étant moins axé sur la visibilité. La situation prenant en compte la présence du spectateur, fait qu'il y a un devenir actif au sein de la représentation. Toutefois, pour qu'il y ait événement, il faut que l'expérience proposée bouscule le cadre de référence du spectateur. La définition phénoménologique que propose Claude Romano (2010) de l'événement en fait à la fois quelque chose qui survient et bouleverse le cours des choses, mais l'événement est aussi assigné, il arrive quelque chose à quelqu'un.⁵ Ainsi, l'événement fait des récits à l'échelle individuelle un élément constitutif qui participe à une histoire commune de l'œuvre. Au détriment d'un objet fixe, l'expérience valorise la construction d'une situation dont la forme expérimentable conjugue le point de vue du public et de l'artiste et se révèle propre à générer une situation d'*auto-réflexion* et d'*auto-expérimentation*.

Enfin, la multiplication des intervenants dans les œuvres de Sehgal assure un certain relai de l'événement fondé en grande partie sur le témoignage ou l'échange. Ces modes médiations font de la situation un jeu social prenant comme cadre le musée, mais ils sont aussi les modes de médiations propres à l'événement. Au final, qu'est-ce que montrent de telles œuvres ? En étant « immatérielles », elles montrent que l'inscription de l'œuvre passe par sa capacité à s'inscrire dans le temps, dans la durée, plus que par son objet matériel. Au fond, l'art n'est peut-être pas là où on le cherche habituellement dans les galeries et les musées, c'est-à-dire dans la matière visible, mais plutôt dans sa capacité à s'inscrire dans une mémoire individuelle et collective. Et c'est bien cette idée que met littéralement à l'œuvre l'artiste en faisant de la transmission et de l'expérience directe de l'œuvre, un enjeu crucial à l'existence de *Kiss* et de *This Situation*. Il met aussi en évidence que la visibilité de l'œuvre est conditionnée par nos croyances et souvent instituée par le monde de l'art. Par ailleurs, Sehgal réactive aussi l'histoire l'art, en effet, il faut relever la propension de ces œuvres à la citation : *Kiss* reprend l'iconographie de peintures et de sculptures célèbres (Auguste Rodin, de Constantin Brancusi, de Gustav Klimt, de Jeff Koons), et *This Situation* outre les citations qui sont dites sans que soit mentionné l'auteur, reprend aussi l'iconographie de peintures célèbres à travers les postures adoptées par les « joueurs ». Ainsi, Sehgal choisit de réactiver une mémoire culturelle, de mettre la mémoire au travail et de réinterpréter ces images en les reliant entre elles. Il crée un réseau d'images, il exprime un « comment? » de l'image. Il convoque, ce que Didi Huberman (2002) nomme l'« image survivante », ces images qui persistent dans le temps et resurgissent sous forme de réminiscence, « *cet après-vivre des images* », nous dit Didi-Huberman « cette capacité qu'ont les formes de ne jamais mourir tout à fait et de resurgir là et quand on les attend le moins » (2002, p. 19). Sehgal déplie la mémoire propre aux images de la culture occidentale, il donne à voir l'image par le biais des corps. La persistance de *Kiss* et *This Situation* s'exercent aussi dans son mode de présentation en continu, des couples de danseurs ou les joueurs se relaient sans interruption pendant les heures d'ouverture, l'œuvre joue en boucle. En ce sens, Tino Sehgal affirme que ses pièces ne commencent pas et qu'elles ne finissent pas (Griffin, 2005, p. 219). Il aspire à un travail qui dure. Un travail, qui propose un art à la fois permanent et vivant (Sayej, 2006, p. 21). En effet, la fin de l'œuvre est difficile à définir, le travail sur les séries fait qu'elles peuvent être rejouées sans fin ou du moins jusqu'à l'effritement de la mémoire humaine qui la relaie. Ces œuvres ne finissent pas vraiment au sens où ne peut pas non plus les délimiter dans l'espace,

mais elles sont aussi persistantes dans le temps par les images qu'elles convoquent et leur répétition possible.

Le refus de Sehgal de la documentation ou encore à la description, c'est le refus d'une approche univoque de l'œuvre et de sa définition. L'œuvre événementielle permet de faire ressortir différents enjeux discursifs et narratifs, elle met l'emphase sur un travail d'interprétation et de lisibilité en relation avec ce qui fait « événement ». L'événement offre de multiples points de vue, il faut comprendre l'importance de l'expérience vécue au sein de l'événement comme phénomène au sens où la « face subjective » et la face « objective » de la description sont indissociable, puisque l'événement ne fait qu'un avec ses modalités de compréhension, d'appropriation et d'expérience qui passe par un « advenant ». Pour décrire ces œuvres, il faut accepter l'impossibilité de réussir à faire une description dite « objective », en énumérant les matériaux ou encore en transcrivant le déroulement des actions. Il faut accepter que l'objectivité soit inatteignable. Les situations sont soumises à des variations et à des possibles : l'œuvre nous échappe en partie de par la complexité et la variété des relations qu'elle tisse. Accepter de la décrire, c'est entrer de plain-pied dans l'ordre du discours, c'est réactiver sa propre mémoire des événements, ce que l'on a vécu au musée avec les interprètes, ce qui s'est produit qui reste de cette expérience (ou si rien n'est advenu oublier). De même, c'est aussi plonger dans un partage d'expérience qui nous relie à un récit commun. Décrire ces œuvres, c'est les lire et les relire à la lumière de ses possibilités. C'est préférer une subjectivité assumée et contrôlée à une objectivité qui n'est qu'un leurre.

¹ Ce terme est utilisé par Sehgal lors d'intervention publique ou de compte-rendu pour définir le rôle des participants dans le cadre de *This Situation*.

² Au titre de ce qu'on désigne usuellement comme oeuvre d'art, peuvent servir de *parergon* : un encadrement, un titre, une légende, un commentaire, une préface, une signature, des traits ou inscriptions qui entourent le document, une devise, un blason, un cartel, un cartouche, un espace environnant, etc... Ces éléments contribuent à expliquer, décrire, raconter, fixer, commémorer l'oeuvre. Ils facilitent les identifications.

³ Ce procédé est connu habituellement du public et fait partie des informations qui sont diffusées par l'institution d'accueil, on retrouve aussi dans de nombreux témoignages et entretiens cette mention que les participants sont choisis dans la ville d'accueil. Tel que mentionné sur le site officiel du Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal : « Les interprètes ont été très soigneusement choisis dans les milieux locaux intellectuels et de la danse par le producteur de Sehgal, qui a

travaillé avec eux durant plusieurs semaines à la préparation de l'exposition » Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (2012).

⁴ Ici, on peut se référer à un grand nombre d'articles qui font état de ces enjeux (la sélection n'est exhaustive) : Bishop (2005), Bousteau (2001), Cotter (2010), Colin (2006), Davis (2010), Gauthier (2005), Heiser (2004) et Hoffman (2003).

⁵ Dans son livre, *L'aventure temporelle*, Claude Romano (2010) affirme que la phénoménalité de l'évènement est indissociable de la manière dont l'advenant se l'approprie « c'est-à-dire s'advient à lui-même à travers son épreuve : les faces « objective » et « subjective » de la description demeurent structurellement liées » (p. 35). L'herméneutique événementiale se prolonge alors en une interprétation, l'aventure elle-même. Ainsi, l'appropriation d'évènements permet que surviennent des histoires.

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Biographie

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31. The Tempo of Things: Reconsidering Exhibitions as Performances in Modern Art Museums

Erin McCurdy, Ryerson University and York University

Abstract: In the twenty-first century, modern art museums are being radically redefined as multi-functional centres that aim to facilitate a myriad of experiences. Within this context, the curatorial role has extended well beyond the acquisition and preservation of aesthetic objects to include, among other responsibilities, the presentation of ephemeral and process-based events. In major modern art museums it has become increasingly common to appoint a curator or devote a department to performance-based art, and the designs of many new and renovated gallery spaces take live media into consideration. While the shift towards experience-centred exhibition strategies and the expanding role of visual arts curators have been taken up in recent scholarship, the ascendancy of performing arts curation has received less attention. Instead of distinguishing between the presentation of animated bodies and the exhibition of static things, this paper explores the common ground between visual and performing arts curation as they both operate within modern art museums. Through an analysis of two ‘exhibitions’ curated by the Museum of Modern Art—*Flip Book* (2013), which was performance-based, and *There Will Never Be Silence* (2013-2014), which was predominantly object-oriented—I propose that the ‘white cube’ gallery is no longer a place that accumulates objects outside the flow of time. Rather, it is a site where a variety of objects, experiences and performances can be staged for the public, each possessing their own tempo, or evolving relationship to time. Curation is thus redefined as a temporal gesture, with live performance occupying but one end of a curatorial spectrum organized around the tempo of different media.

Introduction

In an unprecedented move in 2012, the Whitney Museum of American Art transformed its fourth floor galleries into a 6,000 square foot performance space for its Biennial programming and awarded choreographer Sarah Michelson with the Bucksbaum Award, the most lucrative prize bestowed in the visual art world. Months later, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) presented *Some sweet day*, a three-week dance program that staged the work of six internationally renowned choreographers in the museum’s second floor atrium. Overseas the same year, the Centre Pompidou mounted *Danser sa Vie*, an exhibition exploring the relationship between art and dance that incorporated painting, photography, sculpture, film, video and live performance. While dance has traditionally been aligned with theatre, these are just a few recent examples of how dance is gaining traction in the visual art world, taking up temporary residence in major modern art institutions where, historically, it has lacked a strong presence.

This is not to say that the inclusion of dance in art museums is entirely new. During the 1960s, collaborations between choreographers and visual artists began to carve out a space for the body in the art world. Yet early instances of dance presented in major art museums were frequently framed as events or concerts as opposed to examples of core curatorial programming. As such, they were often historicized in a supporting role, inducted into museum archives as separate from the exhibition history of the institution. In recent years, however, it has become increasingly common to appoint an individual or designate a department to performance curation,¹ and many institutions have begun to acquire and ‘exhibit’ performance-based art works.²

As curatorial practices are changing, so are the physical infrastructures of museums. The new downtown building for the Whitney Museum of American Art, slated for completion in 2015, will include a black box theatre (New Building Project, 2014), while Tate Modern unveiled The Tanks in 2012, a gallery space devoted exclusively to the presentation of events and performances. This inclusion of permanent performance spaces in new building designs suggests that the recent trend towards curated performances will be a lasting one. This raises an important question: How does the widespread incorporation of dance transform these modern art institutions and their curatorial practices, which, traditionally, have focused on the collection, exhibition and conservation of static art objects?

Dance, a time-based artistic medium, exists in tension with the illusion of timelessness promoted by modern gallery design. In O’Doherty’s (1999) well-known analysis of the modernist ‘white cube’, he describes the exhibition space as a hermetically sealed box, where art is “untouched by time and its vicissitudes” and hung “in a kind of eternity of display” (p. 15). Within this ‘limbolike’ context, curated art objects are liable to be viewed as autonomous, decontextualized, and separated from life (p. 15). In contrast, the recent interest in dance curation by modern art museums introduces not only the body, but also the flow of time into the gallery. For Fischer-Lichte (2008) a performance, at its most foundational definition, is an event. As such, it possesses a transient relationship to time, and unfolds between performers and spectators (Fischer-Lichte, 2008). Thus, as a performance-based art, dance defies the timelessness of the ‘white cube’ and fails to be framed as an autonomous artwork.

While there are many differences between the curation of objects and the curation of dance, this paper focuses instead on their common ground as they are both practiced in the context of the modern art museum. Instead of creating a dichotomy between ephemeral performances and material things, this essay uses the curation of dance to reconsider object-oriented exhibitions, adopting the view that “an object is just a slow event” (Eveling, in Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004, p. 59).³ Museum objects are transformed by their physical and social contexts and perform multiple meanings based on their curation. In this regard, the modern art museum is no longer a place that accumulates objects outside the flow of time; rather, it is a site that stages a variety of objects, experiences and performances each possessing their own tempo, or evolving relationship to time.

To develop the concept of tempo in the context of curation in the modern art museum, I will examine two programs that I attended at MoMA in the fall of 2013. As the first museum devoted to modern art, MoMA is not only widely acknowledged for its role in constructing the modernist ‘canon,’ but is also “credited with establishing the white cube as an international standard” for gallery design (Grunenberg, 1999, p. 26). This history, paired with MoMA’s recent increase in dance curation, makes it a suitable case for examining the shifting temporality of the modern art museum and its curatorial practices. The first program, *Flip Book* (2013), consisted of numerous ephemeral elements clustered around a live dance performance. The second, *There Will Never Be Silence* (2013-2014), was predominantly object-oriented, drawing upon more conventional exhibition strategies. Despite these obvious differences in format, I will examine the ways *Flip Book* and *There Will Never Be Silence* can be interpreted as exhibitions *as well as* performances, complicating any neat distinction between the curation of moving bodies and inanimate things within the museum.

A brief overview of dance at MoMA

MoMA has a longstanding history of engagement with the art of dance. An archived copy of the museum’s first brochure annotated by founding director Alfred H. Barr, Jr. (1929) states the intent to establish a Department of Theatre and Dance to better represent the “other phases of modern art” (para. 13). While this department was never realized, MoMA established its Dance

Archives in 1940, which ultimately became the Department of Theatre Arts. Although the department dissolved in 1948 (Another modern art: Dance and theatre, 2009), the performing arts continued to play a role throughout the museum's history in the form of events, such as the well-known Summergarden Concert Series, but these events remained peripheral to the museum's core curatorial focus on the visual and plastic arts ("Performance Program," 2014).

In recent years, however, dance has become more visible in museum programming. In 2008, MoMA extended the responsibilities of its media department, renaming it the Department of Media and Performance Art (Performance Program, 2014) and in the short time since then, more than twenty dance performances have been curated, including choreography by Yvonne Rainer, Trisha Brown, Deborah Hay, and Ralph Lemon, among others.

Flip Book

Over three consecutive weekends in the fall of 2013, MoMA mounted one of its most radical dance programs to date: *Musée de la Danse: Three Collective Gestures*, curated in collaboration with choreographer Boris Charmatz. Consisting of three installations bereft of objects, the program offered a counterpoint to dominant strategies for displaying art and producing historical narratives within the modern art museum. It also functioned as a practical exploration of Charmatz's *Manifeste pour un Musée de la danse*, which he penned in 2009. In this manifesto he stretches the museum beyond its origins as a place to house objects, extending its definition to include actions and ideas, as well as precarious, ephemeral and instantaneous gestures (Charmatz, 2009). In doing so, Charmatz (2009) injects the flow of time into the art museum.

For the final installment of his program at MoMA, Charmatz presented *Flip Book*: a choreographic work revisiting the life and career of prolific American choreographer Merce Cunningham. The impetus for the work was *Merce Cunningham: Fifty Years*, a book by Cunningham's archivist David Vaughan (1997) that documents a half-century of contributions made by the choreographer. Throughout the book Vaughan makes extensive use of archival materials, ranging from candid rehearsal shots to two-page full-colour performance photographs.

The book also contains reproductions of many other visual materials including posters, portraits, costume designs, and the choreographic charts Cunningham used to score his works.

In response to these visual materials, Charmatz choreographed *Flip Book*, which reanimates the archival photographs published in Vaughan's (1997) book in the order in which they appear. The result is a piece that creatively engages with Cunningham's work through its documentation, referencing the past while also making something entirely new. While *Flip Book* does not resemble Cunningham's choreography, the process through which it was created captures the spirit of his work. By allowing the publication's images and their order to determine the dance, Charmatz's work not only pays homage to Cunningham's well-known use of scores, it also acknowledges his use of chance in his choreography. Since developing *Flip Book* in 2008, the work has gone through several iterations. Amateurs, professionals, children, and even former Cunningham dancers have performed the ever-evolving work, and as each new cast learns *Flip Book*, Charmatz returns to the score animating the book anew. In this approach to history, Cunningham's legacy is not treated as a fixed entity, despite its documentation in a book. Rather it is a site of play, interpretation, creation, and performance.

Each day of the *Flip Book* program began in MoMA's Marron Atrium with an improvisational talk by Valda Setterfield. Equipped with a headset microphone, the former Cunningham dancer shared anecdotes from her career spent with Cunningham and fielded questions from the audience. She provided deep insight into Cunningham's work and his professional and personal relationship with John Cage. The result was an intensely personal and interactive engagement with Cunningham's history that used Setterfield's memory to bridge the gap between past and present. Setterfield also spoke about her experiences performing in an earlier iteration of *Flip Book*, and provided information about the creative process.

As Setterfield shared her oral history, the professional cast of dancers who would be performing later warmed-up and rehearsed sections of the work. As the dancers moved around clad in costumes layered with rehearsal clothes, audience members caught fragments of the choreography and watched as spacing issues were resolved and transitions were refined before their eyes. While this was occurring, a film documenting a performance of *Flip Book* at Tate

Modern was screened on the back wall of the Atrium. For the museum visitor, three aspects of this single performance-based work were unfolding simultaneously: Setterfield's oral history of the project, the footage from the Tate Modern performance, and the live rehearsal of the version that would be performed later that afternoon.

When the dancers were finished rehearsing, Charmatz took over the microphone and described his creative process to the audience that had accumulated in the atrium. He then invited museum visitors to learn a version of *Flip Book* under his direction. Gathering a group around Vaughan's (1997) book, Charmatz began to assign gestures derived from the publication and choreographed the volunteer cast as they transitioned from image to image. Through the process of re-creating the choreographic shapes documented in Vaughan's book, the visitors learned about Cunningham through their own bodies. Also through their participation, they experienced the repetitive tempo of the rehearsal process and became part of the history of *Flip Book*, performing their very own version of it at MoMA. When the visitors' version of *Flip Book* was complete, each day's program culminated with two performances of the work by its professional cast.

The setting for all of these activities was the Marron Atrium, which was transformed into a 'theatre', outfitted with a performance space, audience seating, and sound and lighting equipment. However, this 'white box' lacked curtains, wings, or a backstage—conventions that often serve to contain the final product of a performance within a theatre setting. By staging *Flip Book* in the atrium, the dancers' entrances and exits were made visible and so were the actions of the lighting and sound technicians. Charmatz also rendered visible the history of *Flip Book* and the labour that created it by integrating Setterfield's recollections, the teaching session, the film documentation from Tate Modern, and the cast's warm-up and rehearsal. Thus, while *Flip Book* included a programmed performance event, it also drew upon the elements of a curated *exhibition* by putting the various dimensions of this choreographic work on *display* before museum visitors. The history of *Flip Book* was treated as a 'thing,' that could be exhibited within the museum. The result was a dance work that behaved like a performance as well as a multi-faceted exhibition acknowledging the past lives of *Flip Book*.

There Will Never Be Silence

In the gallery space adjacent to the atrium, Cunningham and Cage were conjured again, but this time through the exhibition of objects. *There Will Never Be Silence* featured various media, including handwritten scores, film, and art objects—exhibition materials which have, historically, been more at home than the body in the modern art gallery. For O’Doherty (1999) the absence of space and time within the ‘white cube’ creates an environment where “eyes and minds are welcome,” but “space-occupying bodies are not” (p. 15). Within this artificial context, the moving body is “an intrusion,” exemplified by the installation shot which ultimately eliminates the spectator altogether (O’Doherty, 1999, p. 15). This convention was maintained in *There Will Never Be Silence*: the museum’s official installation shots, which accompanied a blog post by co-curator David Platzker (2013), were sanitized of staff and visitors. Despite this, and the fact that *There Will Never Be Silence* did not feature the body in a prominent way like *Flip Book*, it did exhibit materials that have the capacity to *perform* as ‘events’, involving the museum visitor as audience member and co-creator.

There Will Never Be Silence was organized around the earliest surviving score of John Cage’s *4’33”*: four minutes and thirty-three seconds of scored silence divided into three movements during which the performer (or performers) are instructed to make no deliberate noises. Cage recalled that during its 1952 premiere: “You could hear the wind stirring outside during the first movement. During the second, raindrops began pattering the roof, and during the third people themselves made all kinds of interesting sounds as they talked or walked out” (Cage, in *4’33” (In Proportional Notation)*, 2013, para. 2). As the exhibition wall text informed the visitor, the importance of this scored silence was that it “upended the conventional structure of music, shifting attention from the performer to the audience... allowing for endless possibilities of ambient sounds to fill the space” (*There Will Never Be Silence*, 2013, para. 1). While the original score of *4’33”* is now lost, the second and earliest existing score served as the centerpiece of *There Will Never Be Silence*, acting as the pivot around which the exhibition was organized. Displayed on a white pedestal encased in glass, its value as an art object was signified to the visitor.⁴

4'33" was just one of several scores on display as precious art objects in *There Will Never Be Silence*. Positioned across the gallery from 4'33", two roughly square pieces of graph paper ripped from notepads were framed, matted, and hung side by side. Each piece featured a grid of numbered squares drawn in ballpoint pen. Some of the numbers were scratched out, the word 'choice' was scrawled across certain areas, and various amounts of diagonal lines cut across all of the squares. The wall text accompanying the grids informed the visitor that they were choreographic charts produced by Merce Cunningham using chance operations for the dance *Suite by Chance*.

The exhibition also contained a first edition of *Grapefruit*, the collection of event scores by Yoko Ono (1964). Opened to the page describing *Kitchen Piece*, the book instructed the gallery visitor to "Throw all the leftovers you have in the kitchen that day on the canvas. You may prepare special food for the piece" (Ono, 1964). The book operated within the museum on multiple levels. As an art object, it is acknowledged in art historical narratives as a key work of conceptual art from the fluxus movement. Although it is not singular in its existence in the way Cage or Cunningham's hand drawn scores are, its relative rarity as a first edition serves to fetishize its materiality. The visitor could pore over it, observing the texture of the paper, the quality of the print, or the condition of the spine.

However, in addition to its physical presence, this object also gestures towards past and future performances of the conceptual works that lie between its covers. In fact, all of the scores that were included in the exhibition do this. They are simultaneously present and absent despite their seemingly inanimate materiality. They extend to a performance that has already taken place, or that will take place, or perhaps one that is encouraged to unfold in the imagination. Thus, there is something incomplete and participatory evoked through the display of scores as art objects. Throughout the life of these objects, they are entwined with the live events they animate and are animated by. In fact, during the exhibition run, MoMA organized a series of performance events in which a selection of artists presented their own interpretations of 4'33" in a space adjoining the gallery. The result was an activation or animation of Cage's score even as it sat motionless within its glass case.

Another performing object featured in the exhibition was *Zen for Film* by Nam June Paik, which consists of 20 minutes of silent, unexposed film leader projected on a loop by a humming 16 mm projector. The result is a film devoid of sound and images, which draws attention to the material conditions of the film, the screening apparatus and screening environment. The dust that has collected on the lens and filmstrip paired with the physical characteristics of the surface it is projected upon become the visual elements. Similarly, the ambient sounds made by the projector, the environment, and the audience members become its score. Thus, with every screening of Paik's film, the museum visitors become performers or co-creators as they inadvertently produce the accompanying soundtrack. While *Zen for Film* is an art object in the MoMA's collection (housed in a decorated film case), its screening is always a performance event. It will never exist again in the same form, and yet persists to exist anew—a statement applicable to all of the performing arts, as each performance represents a unique iteration of a work within its life span.

Conclusion

It is important to acknowledge that there are very real practical considerations that distinguish between the curation of bodies and things in the modern art museum. Health and safety considerations, the attention span of museum visitors, and spatial and acoustic requirements are just a few of the challenges faced by curators integrating performing arts into the museum. Rather than highlight these differences, the goal of this paper has been to explore the overlapping terrain between performing and visual arts curation within the transforming context of the modern art museum. As a result, these case studies disrupt any neat distinction between performances and exhibitions.

While I have focused on two separate, yet complementary, programs at MoMA, the current interest in performance on the part of predominantly visual arts institutions coincides with a turn towards participatory and process-oriented exhibitions. Through the incorporation of performing arts, such as dance, into gallery spaces, modern art museums invite ephemerality, transience, and life to invade the timelessness of the 'white cube.' The result is a transformation of the museum from its origins as mausoleum housing autonomous art objects outside the flow of time to its present incarnation as *stage* facilitating dynamic encounters with 'events'. In this changing context, curation in the modern art museum can be redefined as a temporal gesture with

live performance occupying but one end of a curatorial spectrum organized around the tempo of different media in which elements of a performance can be exhibited and exhibited objects can perform.

Acknowledgments

This research was supported by grants from Ryerson's International Conference and Research Support Fund and Graduate Program in Communication and Culture, as well as the Canadian Media Research Consortium. I extend special thanks to my supervisor Sophie Thomas and committee members Anna Hudson, Norma Sue Fisher-Stitt and Danielle Robinson.

¹ Ana Janevski, Associate Curator in the Department of Media and Performance Art at the Museum of Modern Art, remarked upon MoMA's recent shift from programmed events to curatorially framed performances while moderating "An Evening with Boris Charmatz, Simone Forti, and Ralph Lemon," a conversation panel held on October 21, 2013 to discuss the presentation, collection and conservation of performance-based art within the museum.

² This expansion of the curatorial role into the domain of performance was the impetus behind "Collecting the Performative," a 22-month research network investigating emerging approaches for the collection and conservation of non-material art, initiated by Tate Research in April 2012 (<http://www.tate.org.uk/about/projects/collecting-performative>).

³ Stanley Eveling, professor at the University of Edinburgh, never published his view that objects are 'slow events.' Katherine Young, who studied with the existential philosopher during the sixties, reported it to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett. My use of the quotation is indebted to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's writings on tangible and intangible heritage as well as museum objects. See also Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's keynote address "The Museum as Catalyst," *Museums 2000: Confirmation or Challenge*, organized by ICOM Sweden, the Swedish Museum Association and Swedish Travelling Exhibition/Riksställningar in Vadstena, Sept. 29, 2000 (retrievable online at <https://www.nyu.edu/classes/bkg/web/vadstena.pdf>).

⁴ While photography was permitted throughout *Flip Book*, photographs of this object-oriented exhibition were strictly prohibited. This is possibly because some of the exhibited items were on loan and MoMA did not receive permission to photograph them. However, by forbidding photography within *There Will Never Be Silence*, the exhibition reinforced the modernist view of the art museum object as a singular masterpiece.

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Author's Biography

Erin McCurdy is a PhD candidate studying Communication and Culture at Ryerson and York Universities. She holds an MA in Communication and Culture and a BFA in Performance Dance. Her dissertation, *Exhibiting Dance, Performing Objects: Curating Dance in Modern Art Museums*, examines the recent influx of dance in museum programming.

32. Commissaire en art de la scène au Québec, un militantisme

Sylvie Lachance, Codirectrice artistique avec Jacob Wren du groupe interdisciplinaire montréalais PME-ART et ex-commissaire en arts de la scène

Résumé : Le commissariat est, entre autres, une volonté de provoquer la rencontre entre un travail artistique et un public. On voit de plus en plus de non-professionnels démontrer du talent pour concocter des telles rencontres, dans divers contextes. Alors pourquoi la professionnalisation de la fonction de commissaire serait-elle souhaitable, en arts de la scène? Quelle est la différence majeure entre effectuer une sélection d'artistes sur une base ponctuelle et assumer une direction artistique? Selon moi, c'est de le faire dans la durée, de s'engager avec vision dans un milieu artistique donné, de parfaire ses connaissances de la pratique et du contexte dans lequel celle-ci évolue, en plus de développer une curiosité, une générosité et un sens éthique (comme contrepoids au pouvoir que donne la position?). Et encore faut-il assurer la pérennité de ses actions comme diffuseur (ex. : cachet aux artistes, services techniques, visibilité et public appropriés, échanges artistiques, etc.).

Dans mon exposé, je parlerai de mon expérience de commissaire en arts de la scène (1990-2006) et de l'effervescence qui prévalait au Québec en arts interdisciplinaires, dans les années 1980, grâce à l'action de quelques artistes, critiques et... programmeurs : diffusion de musiques alternatives dans les Cégeps, émergence des centres d'artistes en arts visuels, de la danse « actuelle », de la musique « actuelle », de CINARS et RIDEAU, en plus de voir des artistes interdisciplinaires élevés (temporairement) au rang de vedettes « mainstream ». Je parlerai également de manière critique de la « contre-réforme » disciplinaire et mercantile qui a suivi, favorisant le conservatisme que nous subissons toujours en arts de la scène au Québec, alors qu'un cercle restreint de diffuseurs contrôle encore une part importante de la diffusion internationale.

Cette fermeture m'a amenée à fonder *Les 20 jours du théâtre à risque*, en 1990, qui s'est tenu à Montréal, Québec et en régions du Québec. Devenir diffuseur était pour moi un geste militant. Les artistes créateurs manquaient de pouvoir et d'appui pour accomplir leur travail et proposer de nouveaux contenus. Il s'agissait de prendre les moyens pour que le milieu artistique interdisciplinaire québécois et montréalais soit passionnant, sans compromis. À mon avis, il fallait appuyer des artistes très talentueux et leur donner le contexte national, interrégional et international le plus stimulant possible, permettant de faire évoluer leur pratique. Le déséquilibre des ressources entre les générations et le manque d'appui chroniques aux pratiques émergentes a eu raison de cet organisme qui a fermé ses portes en 1998.

Je comparerai ces expériences à la situation actuelle. Quelles sont les méthodes de commissariat qu'artistes et diffuseurs privilégient présentement pour dynamiser et pérenniser leurs pratiques? Comment s'articulent les commissariats collégiaux et individuels dans le milieu?

Introduction

Le commissariat est, entre autres, une volonté de provoquer la rencontre entre un travail artistique et un public. En art, ce qui stimule le plus, c'est l'œuvre à voir et à entendre. Écouter et regarder l'œuvre, reconnaître les idées proposées par l'artiste, sans trop d'attentes et de préjugés. Peut-on simplement laisser travailler les artistes (en paix), sans trop de bruits de fond? Laisser le « spectateur » regarder et apprécier l'œuvre par lui-même? Aujourd'hui, ce postulat me semble un geste militant, voir utopique en arts de la scène contemporains, souvent tentés par le « succès » et l'événementiel.

Bien sûr, les commissaires créent des contextes pour les œuvres, ce qui exige une part de connaissances, de vision et de personnalité. Mais je reste critique des contextes « surdéterminés » (et « surdimensionnés ») car, comme le disait un artiste norvégien en arts visuels que j'ai rencontré en 1997 (coïncidant d'ailleurs avec le début de ma collaboration avec l'artiste Jacob Wren, au sein du groupe de création PME-ART) : «... nowadays, in visual arts, the curator is the real artist, the artist has no power anymore, he is only there to provide with goods ».¹ Cette critique m'a alors semblée terriblement pertinente.

Selon moi, un commissaire doit jouer un rôle actif de développement de son milieu : effervescence, « qualité », pertinence et pérennité (pas seulement pour sa carrière, son CV ou même son organisme). Les autres intervenants du milieu doivent également contribuer en se donnant une vision commune, à tout le moins une vision d'ensemble. Cette concertation peut se faire à condition que le milieu soit éclairé, réfléchi, courageux et fasse converger ses rapports de force d'une façon dynamique.

Commissaire ou non, on doit se poser les mêmes questions que soulevaient Rose-Marie Arbour dans *L'art qui nous est contemporain*: « [...] quel est sa légitimité? son intelligibilité [...] pourquoi en faire? À ces questions assez universelles (des réponses variées seront mises en pratique) selon chaque contexte des lieux où elles se posent » (Arbour, 1999, quatrième de couverture). Et c'est un peu ce que je tenterai de faire aujourd'hui : un bref historique de la situation générale du commissariat en arts de la scène au Québec, de 1990 à aujourd'hui, avec quelques exemples de réponses originales, expérimentées au Québec, parfois inspirées d'ailleurs.

Un bref historique

Au cours des années 1980, une grande effervescence prévalait au Québec dans les arts interdisciplinaires, favorisant une collaboration et une contamination excitante entre les artistes non-disciplinaires (qui refusaient toute catégorisation) ou issus de différentes disciplines. (On peut dire que le post-modernisme avait alors gagné toutes les sphères de la société québécoise).

Cette émergence était due à :

- quelques artistes (Édouard Lock et LaLaLa Human Steps, Michel Lemieux, Natalie Derome, des artistes et performeurs issus des arts visuels et de la musique « actuelle »);
- certains artistes interdisciplinaires étaient élevés (temporairement, on le sait maintenant) au rang de vedettes parfaitement « *mainstream* » (Laurie Anderson, Jan Fabre), déclassant même des pratiques beaucoup plus institutionnelles ou commerciales.

Et l'émergence ...

- de revues (*Virus Montréal, Vice-Versa, Inter, Parachute, etc.*)
- de la critique (personnellement, Solange Lévesque me manque beaucoup);
- des programmeurs à Montréal et à Québec et dans plusieurs régions du Québec;
- des festivals internationaux, qui se positionnaient surtout comme des relais nord-américains du circuit international des grands festivals;
- de plusieurs centres d'artistes en arts visuels et de la danse « actuelle » (Tangente);
- de RIDEAU (marché québécois des arts de la scène), un réseau de salles souvent logées dans les universités ou les collèges est devenu « professionnel » dans les années 1980, ses directeurs généraux et artistiques devaient autofinancer la diffusion (et se tourner vers des productions plus consensuelles ou commerciales);
- du CINARS (marché annuel international des arts de la scène), fondé sur les arts de la scène innovants (pour devenir plus commercial avec le temps).

C'est dans ce contexte effervescent que j'ai décidé de faire un stage en Belgique en 1998 et 1999, notamment au Vooruit, pour voir comment les Flamands s'y prenaient pour créer et pour tourner autant. À la fin des années 1980, avec le départ pour la Suisse de Maurice Béjart et de son Ballet du XXe Siècle (ce qui libérait des millions de francs pour la culture en Belgique), Hugo de Greef, du Kaaitheatre de Bruxelles, un rouage essentiel dans l'avènement de la « vague

flamande », revendiquait que la moitié des budgets de subventions soit dévolue à la création contemporaine, sur un pied d'égalité avec les institutions artistiques (opéra, ballet, théâtre national, musées). Je ne pense pas que la « vague flamande » ait obtenu toutes ses revendications mais elle a bénéficié d'un soutien substantiel et on connaît le succès de la vague flamande qui a durablement inspiré des artistes du monde entier et qui donnait le sentiment qu'on pouvait être et d'avant-garde, et bien soutenu (« mainstream », en somme).

Les Flamands à l'époque tournaient beaucoup plus à l'étranger que chez-eux. Comme cela se faisait un peu partout en Europe de l'Ouest, ils ont créé des festivals et des lieux de diffusion pluridisciplinaires et interdisciplinaires présentant une programmation très pointue (« avant-garde »), gérée par des directeurs artistiques, en plus de programmeurs disciplinaires, au besoin. Ces lieux « qui agissaient localement mais pensaient globalement » étaient soutenus par les politiques dans un esprit macro-économique, d'économie politique reconnaissant la valeur sociale de la culture. (Pour permettre la tournée de spectacles des artistes locaux, on reconnaissait qu'il faut une réciprocité et en accueillir également.) Même de très petites villes d'Europe se sont dotées durablement de tels lieux grâce à la volonté artistique du milieu et de son militantisme auprès des pouvoirs publics pour soutenir des actions innovantes, non-conservatrices. (On conclut trop vite que ce type d'intervention est impossible en Amérique du nord, à mon avis.)

Voici, en vrac, quelques éléments que j'ai retenus des Européens:

- festivals (ponctuels), lieux de diffusion (permanents, annuels) ou autres formes (y compris hors les murs des lieux de diffusion);
- cachets pour les artistes locaux et étrangers. Services offerts aux artistes (technique et promotion) pouvant desservir plusieurs démarches artistiques et provoquer des économies d'échelle;
- artiste pouvant se concentrer davantage sur la création (plutôt que la production et diffusion) même avec des budgets limités;
- attraction de publics sur la base de démarches artistiques spécifiques, innovatrices;
- lieu qui développe et pérennise les pratiques grâce à la circulation de spectacles qui prolonge la vie des créations, qui permet la confrontation artistique avec des publics différents et d'autres

artistes, et la rencontre avec d'autres diffuseurs (qui invitent le spectacle à leur tour éventuellement);

- l'artiste participe à l'évolution de la pratique dans un réseau local, régional ou national mais aussi international, (« international, donc contemporain », pour reprendre encore les termes de Rose-Marie Arbour²).

Je rappellerai qu'au cours des années 1990 et 2000, une « contre-réforme » disciplinaire et mercantile a suivi cet élan, favorisant le conservatisme que nous subissons toujours en arts de la scène au Québec, alors qu'un cercle restreint de diffuseurs contrôle encore une part importante de la diffusion nationale et internationale.

Au Québec, à la même époque, la plupart des théâtres ou des lieux de diffusion appartenaient à des groupes de créations qui se programmaient aux meilleures périodes de l'année et louaient leurs salles aux dates restantes, n'offrant aux artistes locataires que peu de services (système de location comme modèle). Les artistes locataires devaient assumer l'entièreté du travail de diffusion (technique, promotion et développement de public). Le modèle de location a toujours été plutôt la règle dans le monde anglo-saxon (même si cela a un peu changé au Québec ces dernières années). Preuve de la disparité des moyens entre les disciplines, aucun lieu n'était alors dédié à la danse à Montréal.

Le financement des arts était alors presque totalement bloqué et tout argent neuf allait presque uniquement dans les coffres des institutions ou des groupes qui possédaient les salles (presque tous en théâtre). Comme un éléphant dans un magasin de porcelaine, tout mouvement de fonds risquait de se faire au détriment de l'existence d'un autre organisme (comme on le voit maintenant dans diverses disciplines).

Voici un exemple particulièrement aberrant : au début des années 1990, au pire moment des compressions budgétaires du Conseil des Arts du Canada, plusieurs théâtres membres de TAI (Théâtres associés Inc., les théâtres institutionnels) ont été augmentés. Pourtant, les artistes travaillant dans ces institutions ont peu ressenti ces augmentations dans leurs cachets (voir les normes syndicales de l'époque). Cette politique de « consolidation du milieu » (soutenir en

priorité les organismes déjà en place) a créé une iniquité générationnelle et transdisciplinaires durables, laissant de côtés les formes émergentes. Par exemple, les compagnies intermédiaires à fonctionnement ou des compagnies à projet voyaient leurs subventions déclinées dans les années 1990, les subventions de projets passant de 20 000 \$ ou 30 000 \$, dans les années 1980, à 4000 \$ ou 5000 \$ par projet, ou même moins, dix ans plus tard!

Les 20 jours

C'est dans ce contexte que j'ai créé, en 1990, avec Richard Ducharme, le festival *Les 20 jours du théâtre à risque*. Mon expérience de commissaire en arts de la scène a duré de 1990 à 2006. Ainsi, devenir diffuseur était pour moi un geste militant, un engagement total. Il s'agissait de prendre les moyens pour que le milieu artistique québécois et montréalais soit passionnant, sans compromis. À mon avis, il fallait appuyer des artistes talentueux, plutôt jeunes (en fait, à un âge où ils peuvent encore se laisser évoluer dans leur pratique), et de leur donner le contexte le plus stimulant possible, national et international. Les artistes créateurs manquaient de pouvoir et d'appui pour accomplir leur travail et proposer de nouveaux contenus. Cela devait changer radicalement, selon moi, et je trouvais que de rassembler les forces autour d'un festival était un geste structurant, voire stimulant.

En sept éditions, le festival a présenté une soixantaine de groupes ou artistes, donnait un cachet et fournissait salles, technique et promotion (d'une valeur totale d'environ 20 000\$ par production), ce qui a représenté environ 74 % de nos revenus totaux. C'était un festival annuel de création contemporaine originale québécoise, francophone et anglophone, avec un volet canadien, ayant lieu à Montréal, à Québec et dans des villes des régions du Québec (Sherbrooke-Lennoxville et Jonquière). Au fil des ans, le festival est devenu un laboratoire de rencontres entre artistes, aux plans national et international, avec des ateliers de création qui ressemblent aux « mixOFF » du *OFF.T.A* aujourd'hui (Lachance, 1995).

Aux *20 jours*, nous présentions du théâtre et d'autres formes d'art de la scène ou de performances qui questionnaient la dramaturgie traditionnelle et hiérarchique (où le texte est interprété par un metteur en scène, et réinterprété par les acteurs et concepteurs techniques). Il s'agissait de démarches plus collectives, axées sur le processus, et moins hiérarchiques, où le

texte et tous les éléments de la création (corps, texte, espace, musique, etc.) sont sollicités dans la gestation de l'œuvre et dans son rendu. Les termes de « dramaturgie post-mainstream » ou « théâtre post-dramatique » pourraient être empruntés aux chercheurs norvégien et allemand, Knut Ove Arntzen et Hans-Thies Lehmann. Ces démarches étaient influencées consciemment par le performatif, la performance en arts visuels. En 1992, la revue *Inter de Québec* parlait des *20 Jours* comme d'un lieu où on présentait comme « théâtre » une variété d'œuvres qui allait—selon une grille d'évaluation assez fascinante conçue par Alain-Martin Richard (1992)—de 100 % théâtre à 100% performance (selon les œuvres).

En 1990, nous étions très peu de programmeurs en arts de la scène contemporains au Québec (festival *Les 20 jours*, *Tangente* et les centres d'artistes, les festivals internationaux en danse, théâtre, performance et musique, de même que certains musées). L'appui du milieu et du public aux *20 jours* était palpable mais nous ne bénéficions que de subventions minimales du Ministère des Affaires culturelles du Québec, des Conseils des arts ou du ministère du Patrimoine canadien, qui ne représentaient que 36% environ de nos revenus totaux. Après une augmentation du Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec, en 1995 (année « off », exceptionnellement, car le festival était annuel), nous avons eu l'annonce surprise d'une toute dernière subvention accordée au festival en 1996! Tous les arguments, qui jouaient en notre faveur l'année précédente, étaient inversés. (À noter qu'aucun n'événement n'avait eu lieu entre-temps, donc aucune contre-performance n'était en cause.) Un facteur sans doute : les festivals internationaux en théâtre avaient demandé conjointement une augmentation et comme les montants dévolus au programme « événements majeurs » du CALQ était eux aussi « figés »; sans argent neuf, ces augmentations ont eu comme effet de sacrifier un organisme; notre festival a définitivement stoppé ses activités avec une édition tronquée, en 1998.

Le MAI

Un mot bref sur le MAI (*Montréal, arts interculturels*) : de 2001 à 2006, j'ai été directrice générale et artistique de ce lieu de diffusion voué à la diversité culturelle en arts contemporains (arts de la scène et en arts visuels). Un autre militantisme encore plus directement politique me semblait nécessaire : anticolonialisme dans l'approche avec tous les intervenants, ouverture à des esthétiques historiquement exclues de l'art contemporain, « empowerment » des intervenants et

dénonciation du racisme (francophone et anglophone, notamment dans les jurys), etc. Je soulignerai simplement ici le rôle marquant du *MAI* dans l'élaboration de politiques d'action positive pour les artistes contemporains issus des diverses cultures présentes au Québec auprès du Conseil des arts de Montréal, du Conseil des arts du Canada et du Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec et, croyez-moi, en 2001-2003, il s'agissait bien de militantisme!

Les pratiques commissariales

Que remarque-t-on lorsque l'on compare ces pratiques commissariales aux pratiques actuelles? Quelles sont les méthodes de commissariat qu'artistes et diffuseurs privilégient présentement pour dynamiser et pérenniser leurs pratiques? Comment s'articulent les commissariats collégiaux et individuels?

Depuis les années 2000, on voit de plus en plus de « non-professionnels » démontrer du talent pour concocter de belles rencontres artistiques et culturelles. Aussi, plusieurs artistes programment des événements du plus grand intérêt artistique dans une expression autonome et autogérée (arts visuels, notamment).

Parallèlement, certains intervenants programment des événements en payant peu ou pas les artistes et leur offrant des conditions minimales. Certains voient là une nouvelle façon de gérer la diffusion dans les conditions actuelles. Mais pour moi, l'exploitation des artistes est loin d'être une nouveauté et le commissaire doit tenter d'améliorer les conditions de la pratique; il ne doit pas les empirer

Pendant ce symposium, plusieurs ont évoqué la nécessité d'une formation en commissariat en arts de la scène. Pourquoi la professionnalisation serait-elle souhaitable? Quelle est la différence majeure entre effectuer une sélection d'artistes sur une base ponctuelle et assumer une direction artistique?

Selon moi, c'est de le faire dans la durée, de s'engager avec vision dans un milieu artistique donné, de parfaire ses connaissances de la pratique (occidentale et autres) et du contexte dans lequel cette pratique évolue, en plus de développer une curiosité, une générosité et

un sens éthique (pour faire contrepoids au pouvoir que donne la position, qui doit rester une préoccupation constante). Une question majeure pour moi : il faut assurer la pérennité de ses actions comme diffuseur (ex. : cachet aux artistes, services techniques, visibilité et public appropriés, créer des échanges artistiques, etc.) et trouver les ressources pour réaliser ses objectifs.

Alors oui, une formation est souhaitable. Toutefois, il faut absolument, selon moi, éviter un système uniforme où rien ne peut exister hors des commissariats « reconnus ». (Il faut donc laisser une place aux locations, à l'autoproduction, programmées par qui voudra.)

Les méthodes de commissariat de la jeune génération sont souvent plus collégiales. Je pense entre autres au *OFF.T.A.*, où un nombre impressionnant de conseillers artistiques se partagent la prospection disciplinaire du festival tout en donnant une liberté d'action et de décision à sa directrice artistique, ce qui permet une diffusion dynamique de toutes les disciplines (ou les non-disciplines).

Notons que les moyens dont la jeune génération dispose sont déplorables. Je pense comme plusieurs qu'il nous faut apprendre à gérer la décroissance. Mais décroissance n'égal pas pauvreté! Il faut continuer de demander des augmentations des budgets de subventions et que celles-ci soient distribuées équitablement. J'ai évoqué plus haut que des praticiens en contrôle de leur secteur ont accaparé la plupart des budgets et hausses disponibles, certains parlant même ouvertement de « compétition ». C'est ce qu'il faut éviter.

Si on veut un milieu sain et florissant, il nous faut être solidaire dans la défense d'un art stimulant et en phase avec son temps. Les jurys des conseils des arts devraient fonder leur analyse sur une base artistique, critique et méthodique et non sur une base générationnelle, de maintien de la main d'œuvre ou de sauvegarde des immobilisations (pour les propriétaires d'infrastructures), à moins d'obtenir de nouvelles sources de financement en plus de celles réservées aux arts. Il faut soutenir les meilleurs de chaque génération (institutions, organismes de diffusions et de création, artistes) et créer des « institutions relatives » qui desservent divers publics. (Je pense par exemple à des intervenants de taille moyenne, comme Tangente ou Studio

303, qui ont fait plus pour dynamiser, renouveler et stabiliser les milieux de la danse et de l'interdisciplinaire que bien d'autres grands organismes.) Je souhaiterais un jury de pairs difficiles, connaisseurs et ouverts, auxquels des penseurs et de chercheurs pourraient se joindre pour enrichir le processus.

Comme l'a déclaré le programmateur en arts de la scène du Vooruit, Mathieu Goeury, lors d'une table-ronde du *Festival TransAmériques* en 2013, « Nous devrions être beaucoup plus fâchés que nous ne le sommes (...), » et, il continuait « [...] certaines pratiques actuelles auraient été très bien soutenues, il y a trente ans » (Goeury, 2013). Je crois que nous devons questionner ce déséquilibre des générations.

Remerciements

Dena Davida, qui m'a inspirée comme commissaire et m'a incitée à soumettre cette communication. Richard Ducharme, mon éternel complice en arts et dans la vie.

¹ Malheureusement, je ne me souviens que du prénom de cet artiste, Harald, mais je me suis toujours souvenue de ses mots. Cette citation se retrouve dans les notes personnelles que j'ai prises au séminaire *Theatre Texte Context 2*, au Bergen International Theatre, Norvège, en octobre 1997.

² « Aujourd'hui, ce n'est pas grâce à l'universalité de son accessibilité que la production artistique se dit contemporaine, mais par son inscription dans un circuit d'échanges internationaux dont elle tire sa légitimité et des valeurs esthétiques partagées à l'échelle internationale » (Arbour, 1999, p. 72).

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Biographie de l'auteur

Sylvie Lachance, diplômée en théâtre de l'UQÀM, a fondé avec Richard Ducharme le festival *Les 20 jours du théâtre à risque* (1990-1998) et assumé la direction générale et artistique du MAI (Montréal, arts interculturels), diffuseur en arts vivants et en arts visuels (2001-2006). Depuis plus de quinze ans, Sylvie Lachance codirige avec Jacob Wren PME-ART, un groupe de création interdisciplinaire qui s'est produit dans plus de quarante villes en Europe, au Japon, aux États-Unis, au Québec et ailleurs au Canada.

www.pme-art.ca www.everysongiveeverwritten.com

33. Collective Creation and Improvised Curation: A Discussion with the *Body Slam*

Gregory Selinger, Helen Simard, Roger White, Xavier Laporte, Victoria Mackenzie, and Claudia Chan Tak: *Body Slam* Improv Collective

Abstract: *Body Slam* is an instantaneous composition collective, comprised of a group of interdisciplinary artists who are specialists in dance, poetry, and music. In April 2014, *Body Slam* was invited to be a ‘company-in-residency’ of sorts at ACAQ symposium: the members of our collective attended the entire four day event, and to draw inspiration from the various papers, presentations, and discussions to create an hour-long, improvised performance that we presented on the final day of the conference. This paper is a transcription a conversation on curation between members of the collective that occurred during a rehearsal leading up to the symposium: here, we will discuss the difference between a curator, choreographer, and artistic director, as well as the responsibilities of a curator in the performing arts context.

Body Slam is an instantaneous composition collective, comprised of a group of interdisciplinary artists who are specialists in dance, poetry, and music.¹ Gregory Selinger is the founder of *Body Slam*, and while he is often labeled as ‘artistic director’ of our collective, his role is ambiguous. Gregory usually takes on certain administrative responsibilities, such as organizing group meetings, shows, and selecting specific artists from the collective’s flexible membership for public presentations; *Body Slam* performers Helen Simard and Stephanie Morin-Robert also particularly contribute with administrative work and suggestions. However, many of *Body Slam*’s administrative and artistic decisions are made collectively, with leadership emerging from various members at different moments, such as: proposing and guiding group studio improvisation exercises for the day, or proposing a structure or theme before a public instantaneous composition.

In April 2014, *Body Slam* was invited to be a ‘company-in-residency’ of sorts at ACAQ symposium: the members of our collective attended the entire four day event, and to draw inspiration from the various papers, presentations, and discussions to create an hour-long, improvised performance that we presented on the final day of the conference. In preparation for this event, we met to rehearse and discuss how we understood the concept of curating in relation to our collective and our collaborative improvisations; the following text is a slightly edited (or, dare we say, curated) transcription of that conversation.

Gregory Selinger: So... I want to talk about this performance that we're doing for the ACAQ symposium, because it will allow us to begin explore this idea of *Body Slam* as something that I 'curate'...

Helen Simard: And that, I mean, is kind of how we are framing our performance for the conference?

GS: Yes.

HS: ...There's kind of this idea of you as a curator of the collective?



Photo: Curating an interdisciplinary performance collective is a balancing act for Greg Selinger.

GS: Yeah, I proposed it under that context. Also, I think the main goal of this show is to really to treat the ACAQ symposium as a kind of residency, so we're going to try to go to as many of these nerdy academic talks as possible and try to take in as much information as possible and talk to each other about it. So basically: to take as many ideas from the presentations about the

practice of curating and try to compare, contrast, and digest these ideas to use them as a starting point for us to talk about ourselves and for us to go off on riffs in all kinds of directions. Our performance doesn't have to be like a purely dry danced, 'music-ed', essay; we can definitely go off on personal tangents, but I want to use taking in as much information as possible from the conference as a starting point and as a kind of theme for the improv.

HS: So I guess how would you say that you understand curating and yourself as a curator? What's curating for you? How would you define it?

GS: For me, it's about facilitating an encounter between awesome artists; about bringing these artists together in one particular context, where I believe they can fit together, and then trying to facilitate them to be able to do what they do at their best in that particular context, where everything will somehow fit together, whether in a clear way or an abstract way.

HS: So for you, how would that differ from defining yourself as a choreographer, artistic director or director of sorts?

GS: The word choreographer seems to be getting more and more flexible these days and a lot of people outside of dance, when they hear 'choreographer', they think it's the person who makes up all the steps. Clearly, with *Body Slam*, I'm nothing at all like that. I do often use the term 'artistic director' when I'm applying for grants or shows, because I feel that it's a simple term that makes it pretty clear that I'm the main person responsible for organizing bringing people together. But I feel that 'curator' is more appropriate. I think the difference between artistic direction and curator is that 'curator' is more about facilitating the artists in coming together to create a performance, whereas 'artistic director' implies that I impose a clear, guiding vision for what I want the performance to be. I feel that with *Body Slam* I try to get in the way as little as possible, in order to facilitate bringing every member's vision into this project as much as mine. Yes, I think that because of the dynamic nature of the intentions of *Body Slam*, the way that our intentions are shifting based on all the ideas that different people bring to the table, that 'artistic director' makes it sound more like *Body Slam* is mine... I feel that I'm a little bit closer to a curator.

RW: Can I just interject?

GS: Yeah.

RW: You said that the word ‘choreographer’ is getting expanded. But do you think you could make the argument that the definition of the word ‘curator’, or the idea of what curation is, is also being expanded in the same way?

GS: Yeah, definitely. Well, something that I remember reading when I was looking into why Dena Davida and Jane Gabriels are trying to organize this symposium, is that their interest in having this conference is because curation actually is expanding more and more. It’s no longer just exclusively for museum curators, who choose which artworks or which artists are going to be put on display.

RW: I’m not saying that you’re not a curator. But it’s funny that you would say “because the term ‘choreography’ has been expanded to include all this other stuff, I no longer see myself as a choreographer”—which I think is right, though. I mean, in a sense, you’re not necessarily a choreographer—but I think maybe there might be curators who feel that the same thing is happening to their profession. Do you know what I mean?

GS: Yeah, that there might need to be new terms for what’s being called ‘curating’...

RW: Yeah, it’s interesting stuff. Because I agree with you one hundred percent: what you’re doing with *Body Slam*, you’re not choreographing. And I think that in terms of artistic direction, if you say, that title implies that you’re directing something. You aren’t necessarily directing all the time; you’re letting people do what they do. You’re building off of different people’s strengths to make a whole experience, right? Being like, “Ok, well, I know this person is good at that, and that person is good at this, so let’s bring these people together.”

GS: Uh-huh.

RW: And I might be off topic here, but in curating, there's also the notion of taking care of the art... Like, a museum curator doesn't only put the art on the walls, but they're also charged with taking care of it afterwards and researching it and all this kind of stuff. I don't know... you might say, "Oh Roger, you might curate music". But I don't see myself at all as a curator, personally. Hmm, I wonder though: if I put a band together, am I curating a band? I don't know. I think I'm just forming a band. Is a bandleader a curator? Or are they just a bandleader. I don't think there's a problem with the term 'bandleader'. You think about James Brown... James Brown is on stage and says: "Okay! [snaps] trumpet solo: now!" And then there's a trumpet solo. And then he'll be like, "Take it to the bridge!", and the band goes to the bridge. I guess you could make an argument that he might be spontaneously curating, but in music, that's called being a bandleader, and I don't think there's necessarily a need to change that terminology.



Photo: Does the concept of curating need to be stretched or distorted to fit the performing arts context?

Victoria Mackenzie: It's interesting because I've never even actually thought about the word 'curation' in relationship to living and breathing things, like a live performance. I only think about it as kind of a fixed, inanimate object, museum type display. It doesn't make sense for me, but it would maybe make sense more if we could discuss some of the words that are kind of synonymous with the concept of curation in performance. Personally, when I think of curation, I think of museums and installations and things like that. But I guess we have people in dance, like Dena Davida at *Tangente*, who could be called curators. Right now, I think of them as presenters... I just don't have a synonymous vocabulary for curators in my brain.



Photo: Trying to make sense of the difference between curating, choreographing, and directing.

Xavier Laporte: Yeah, for me, it was super vague what curation was in the first place, when I read about the symposium. So I researched it on Google, what curating was, and it still isn't clear for me. It seems to be somewhere between envisioning a project to promoting it, and being the link person between different projects or people. But that's still pretty vague to me... and then trying to figure out the different between the jobs of the booker and artistic director and curator?

Will the booker be doing curating? And the artistic director: will he be doing booking as well? What tasks belongs to which title? It's still very unclear for me what it is, and I hope the conference will enlighten me because now I'm not quite sure.

RW: Yeah, me too [group laughter].

Claudia Chan Tak: Si on parle de la différence entre être commissaire ou directeur artistique, je trouve que dans le cadre de *Body Slam*, Greg joue les deux rôles. Parce qu'être commissaire c'est organiser un évènement et créer une rencontre entre des artistes qui ont, pour toi, un lien artistique ou conceptuel. Alors que la direction artistique, c'est plutôt d'avoir une vision particulière que tu vas amener et c'est aussi comment tu vas diriger les artistes dans telle ou telle direction. Donc pour moi, Greg est le directeur artistique de *Body Slam* quand il prépare des demandes de subventions ou des dossiers pour des appels de projets ou quand il choisit les membres du collectif. Mais il est commissaire de *Body Slam* quand il considère que telle date, il y a un show pour tel type d'évènement et qu'il décide quels artistes iraient bien pour ça : tant de danseurs, tant de musiciens, tant de poètes. Tu vois, pour moi, être commissaire c'est plutôt dans la façon que tu vas construire des liens pour un évènement précis que tu organises. Tandis que le directeur artistique d'un théâtre ou d'un musée va plutôt voir à long-terme c'est quoi 'l'identité' de sa compagnie.

HS: Donc pour toi, c'est en partie une question de comment ça s'inscrit dans le temps?

CCT : Oui, c'est ça. Et je pense que c'est propre à chaque situation aussi. Par exemple, en musique, des musiciens dans un « band » qui font leur propre show avec leur propre musique, ça ne va pas être la même chose que si moi, comme commissaire, je fais une commande spéciale pour un spectacle de musique d'une heure avec certains musiciens que j'ai réunis autour d'un concept spécifique pour créer une œuvre unique à travers cette rencontre-là. Est-ce qu'il va avoir quelque chose qui va émerger de ça, de ce collectif comme résultat de cet évènement, de cette rencontre? Ou est-ce que c'est juste un rassemblement d'artistes où chacun ou chacune arrive avec des œuvres indépendantes qui seront placées de façons différentes dans l'espace, sans véritable lien ou rencontre?

HS: Hmm, what you're saying makes me think that it's really about making connections, and about how Roger was saying that part of what a curator does is takes care of the art... I think that's something that people who are in the performing art context can really think of: of how a curator is 'the person who cares for'. It's not just a person who presents; it's not just a booker; it's someone who cares for the art—and in a live art context, the art is made up of living bodies. So it's caring for those bodies, for the people who don't just 'make' the art but 'are' the art, in a way. Maybe that's a difference between people who would see themselves as curators as opposed to bookers. Maybe someone who sees him or her self as a booker is more concerned with the business side of it: selling tickets, having a good show that starts on time and entertains the audience. Whereas maybe people who see themselves as curators in the performing arts are more interested in creating moments in time and space where there is a possibility for encounters between the work, the artist, and the spectator, in order to create an exchange of knowledge through a unique, embodied experience.



Photo: The curator is charged creating exchanges between the work, the artist, and the spectator.

RW: Maybe... but the cynical, paranoid part of me is like, maybe this is an attempt by academics to take over a career that already exists in order to co-opt it and then make it so that you have to get a degree to do it. That's kind of what the paranoid me wonders... there's a profession of booking or programming out there already. It doesn't take a university degree and you don't have to be an academic to do it. So all this theoretical discussion about curating makes the paranoid me wonder: is this an attempt by academia to be like, "Ok, it's ours now"? And in order to go work as a booker, you'll now need a certificate and you now need to hand your money over to the institution to get that certificate... you know what I mean? It's not just your 'job' now; it's your 'practice'. I'm not saying that's what it is, but part of me can't help but think that.

GS: Yeah, that's definitely worth keeping in mind while we listen to the different presentations at the symposium; it's something that we might even be able to address in our presentation or even talk to other presenters about, breaking down the fourth wall and have a conversation about it as we perform. And definitely, we need to bring our own ideas, our own thoughts—as paranoid or personal or tangential as they may be—to the table. I think bringing our perspectives as practitioners to the symposium is as important as being able to echo and integrate the more abstract, theoretical perspectives presented in the various papers.

RW: Anyway, we're running out of rehearsal time... should we start Body Slamming?

GS: Yeah! Let's start Body Slamming.

¹ To learn more about *Body Slam*, please visit their website: <http://www.bodyslamjam.com/>

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Photo credits: All photos by Pascale Yensen

Biography

Body Slam is a multidisciplinary improvisation collective. The group was founded haphazardly in 2011 by Gregory Selinger to do six shows at the *Montreal Fringe Festival*. A surprise hit, they won two awards and were invited to perform at the 2011 *Les Escales Improbables* festival. *Body Slam* continued to hone its skills with group practices and public performances at *Café l'Artère* from 2012 to 2013. In 2013, they also performed at *Nuit Blanche*, *Marché d'art vivant*, *Mile End Poets' Festival* and *The MAI (Montréal arts interculturels)*.

34. Call for new ways of curating performing arts, /theatre.now case study

Jonna Strandberg, MA, performing arts producer, critic, writer and curator

Abstract: Working in a contemporary art museum and planning the performing arts program has driven me to use the title of Performing Arts Curator. In the museum context it is, at this point, simply the clearest definition. *Kiasma* is one of the rare contemporary art museums that has a repertory theatre inside the museum (since its beginning in 1998). Besides curating, my work also includes directing the theatre's technical and production teams. In this paper, I would like to share some views about my work in the contemporary art museum, and discuss some 'new' curatorial ways that we have been testing in context of the annual, international /*theatre.now* event. This event has been changing a lot during its eight-year-long history: in the past two years the content has varied from a retreat-like event (*The Autumn Break for Performing Artists*) to a live group exhibition (*Performance Compost*). The aim has been to develop the performing arts field in Finland by bringing artists together, and also by presenting performance art practices to the public, in order to make it more accessible. In recent years /*theatre.now* has been evolving more or less around curatorial ideas that have changed, or have attempted to change the event.

Trying to work openly with these kinds of starting points has been fertile and inspiring, but also challenging. My intent is to do a quick run-through of the evolution of /*theatre.now*, and open a critical discussion about whether it is constructive to make the event, and *Kiasma* as an art institution, more open. What does this mean in terms of the role of curators, artists and audience? Moreover, there has been institutional critique as long as there have been art institutions. Working as a performing arts curator in a contemporary art museum puts me in a position of a defendant, or a person who try to respond to the critique. I am not a theoretician, so my answers here come from practical work, from our experience in working at *Kiasma*, and particularly from my experiences with the /*theatre.now* event.

Paper:

The basic idea of /*theatre.now* has been to open the whole festival concept and process, and do the event differently every year. Working in such a way, we do not get stuck in one format. Another important aspect of our approach is to work closely with the wishes and needs of the artists. We have meetings two or three times during the year during which we try to invite all the local artists we know in the field of contemporary performance. During ten years of producing /*theatre.now*, we have gone through different kinds of events, from laboratories and workshops to speed dating and performance installations. In 2011, we ran a /*theatre.now Autumn Break*, in which we spent a week sharing ideas and experiences with artists in our theatre space. We also tried to relax and have a decent break from everyday life without any imposing a need to produce anything. Every day we had 'a specialist' (for example, a scientist, lawyer or politician) visiting us, providing different views of the world. At the end of the week, we opened doors to

the public, and some performative ‘things’ were happening. There was even a horror movie produced and screened during the week.

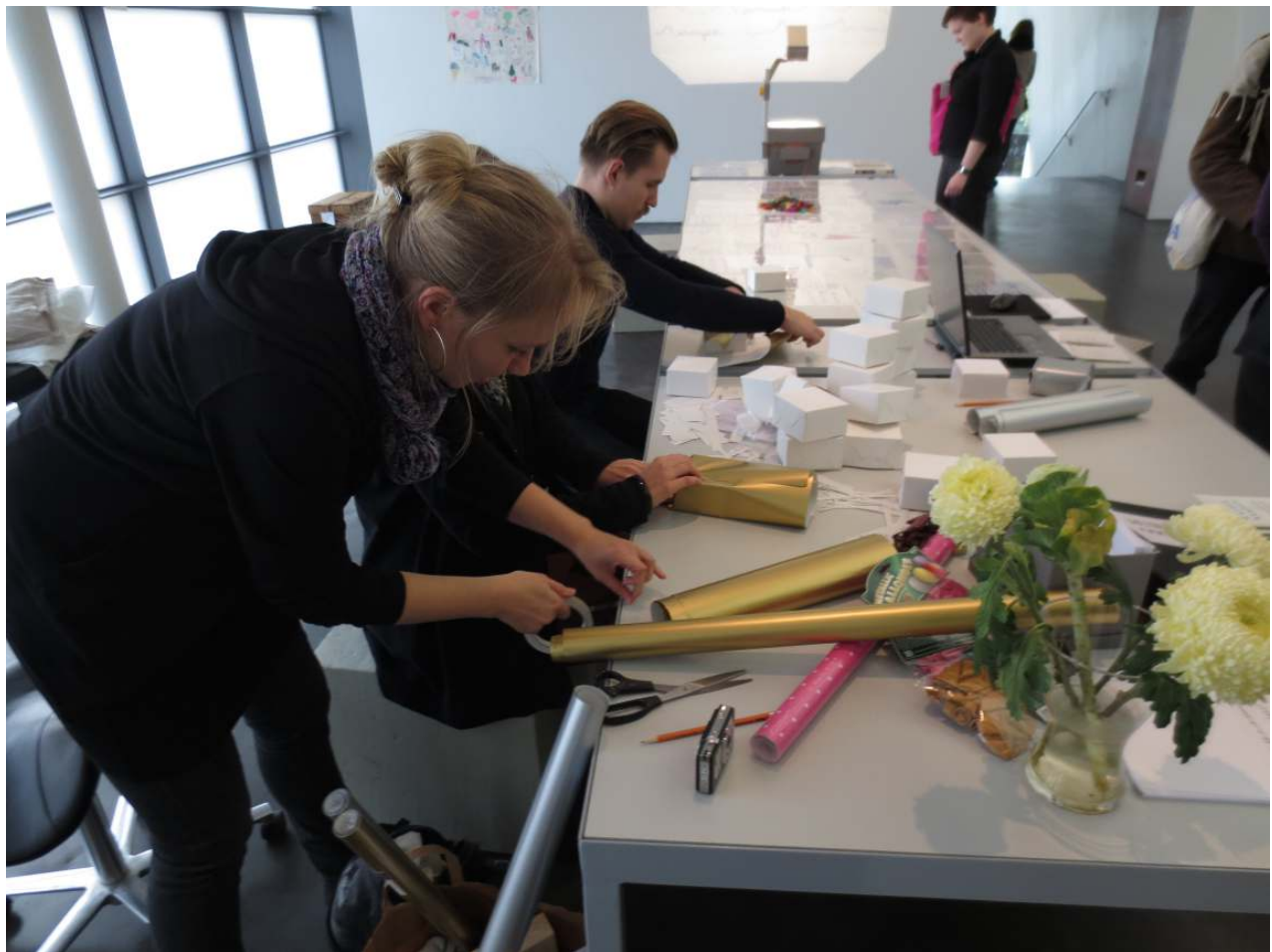
After some time, */theatre.now* now looks more like a festival with performances, work-in-progresses, talks, gigs etcetera than it originally did. But the basic idea has always been to challenge the festival format, and move more towards a creating a platform where different experiments can happen.



In 2012, we wanted to open the process of programming and curating more to local artists. After several meetings we ended up with a core group of six local artists (Elina Latva, Nora Rinne, Tuomas Laitinen, Saara Hannula, Kimmo Modig, and Jenna Sutela) who were interested in working with us, and set up a curatorial team with them. We had a few things set in advance: first, we knew that beside our theatre space in museum, we would have access to a few rooms in *Kiasma's* gallery space for our use over three weeks. Second, we knew that we would work with the fixed theme of ‘documents and archives’, which was also the theme of the

following *Kiasma* exhibition (*Reality Bites, Documents in Contemporary Art*).

Within this new curatorial team of six artists and two curators from *Kiasma*, we agreed that we wanted to do an open call for the performances. We received an overwhelming amount of applications, and ended up choosing over thirty new projects. Half of those artists were unknown to me, and the work was varied: for example, some of the chosen projects resembled audience work, engaging people to think of their own bodies as an archive, or to make documents of their utopias. Some works were based on instant documentation, while others dealt with the problematic nature of performance documentation in general. One work was a false presentation based on false documents, and another was ‘live documentation’ of a punk concert. Some works addressed the link between memory and performance. The team of artist-curators worked as if they were ‘museum guides’, explaining to visitors what was going on.



The event produced various performative actions all day long during the museum's opening hours. We tried to document the event thoroughly, and then presented the documents right away during as part of the even; this meant that the space was transforming and changing constantly. We were living in a constantly shifting process over the three weeks. During that time, *Kiasma* attracted 11, 500 visitors, which is a large number of people for a performance art event in Finland.

Much credit must to be given not only to the great artists and audiences, but also to our wonderful technical team, who made this highly ambitious event a reality. Working in such a close manner with the artists has been very fertile, even though it demands quite a lot of energy from everyone. The next step for us might be to try to open the planning process more to include the audience. Indeed, we have been already working with some activists, which has opened new possibilities. It is worth working with neighbors of your neighbors, as Jean Paul Rathier proposed in his presentation at the ACAQ conference. But at the same time, we have to be careful to not lose the good quality of contemporary art in the hub.



Kiasma is being fully renovated and therefore closing its doors for six months; as such, the next */theatre.now* will be organized in October, 2015, in an empty museum. We are grateful to have an exceptional opportunity to host a weekend with performance art in the middle of renovations. The theme will be ‘Business as unusual’.

In closing, I would like to clearly summarize my own desires concerning */theatre.now* and the direction I would like to see the institution moving at least once in a while. Ultimately, my interest is to switch the idea of our ‘events’:

- (1) from festival to platform
- (2) from ready-made to process-oriented
- (3) from restricted to more accessible
- (4) from one art form to several
- (5) from the selection of one curator to co-curating
- (6) from passive to active audience
- (7) from possessing to sharing (ideas and performances)
- (8) from boring to fun

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Biography

Jonna Strandberg, MA, is a performing arts producer, critic, writer and curator. She has been working in *Kiasma Theatre*, as well as the *Contemporary Art Museum Kiasma / Finnish National Gallery* (Helsinki) as Producer (2004-2010), and as Performing Arts Curator (2010-present). Jonna has an MA in cultural history (University of Turku, 2004), minoring in French language and culture, communications, social psychology, and arts in dance (Open University / The Theatre Academy). She has also written dance critiques and other articles in, among other publications, *TANSSI-lehti* (the Finnish dance magazine).

35. WHAT WE TALK ABOUT WHEN WE TALK ABOUT CURATING THE 'UNEXPECTED'

Syreeta McFadden

Abstract: *Poets in Unexpected Places* (PUP) stages flash literary events in unconventional spaces, featuring accomplished poets and performance artists of diverse backgrounds and aesthetics. Using the element of surprise, PUP seeks to disrupt the frames that confine literature to traditional realms, utilizing the arts to galvanize audiences around the power of language and human stories, promoting community engagement and dialogue in the public arena.

Affectionately known as the Pop Up Poets, PUP is a dynamic collective of writers, performers and educators. The group works with a range of educational institutions, businesses and arts organizations to stage active art experiences with their enlivening pop up performances in cities and towns, nationally and internationally. Recent collaborations have included partnerships with the National Endowment for the Arts, The Juilliard School, New York University, Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Queens Museum of Art, and others.

In addition to curating performances and installations in public spaces, PUP founders also facilitate workshops and panel discussions on creative writing, performance, and public art, recently presenting at Split this Rock Poetry Festival, the Montreal Symposium for Art Curators, and the annual conference for the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP). PUP's work has gained attention from *The New York Times*, Idealist.org and other local and national media outlets. This Brooklyn-based organization is a recent recipient of a grant from the Brooklyn Arts Council.

PUP curators—Samantha Thornhill, Jon Sands, Adam Falkner, Syreeta McFadden, and Elana Bell—are Brooklyn-based artists and educators with advanced degrees from Columbia University, Sarah Lawrence College, and the University of Virginia. They have received awards, fellowships, and residencies from The Academy of American Poets, The Jerome Foundation, Funds for Teachers, and Hedgebrook. PUP curators have exhibited their works in a range of venues, including the Arts Alive Festival in Johannesburg, HBO, and the 2009 Presidential Inauguration.

Syreeta McFadden, co-curator of *Poets in Unexpected Places*, discusses the theory and creative motivation behind the work of *Poets in Unexpected Places* in this lyric essay.

What we now know about spaces is that they carry a resonance beyond perceptibility. What we also now know about public spaces is that we are in an ever-changing dialogue with them. Perhaps we've learned that we must respect the air between us in those spaces. It seems the body remembers what we have tried to logic our way out of remembering: our interconnectedness that transcends time and thought. We try to honor and respect the spaces we

inhabit and respect the spaces between us and if we show honor to spaces the spaces bend and shrink between us. We become one.

What I can tell you is that the Hawaiian people are cognizant of their relationship to space. I suppose that all island people show a particular depth of knowing the sacredness of space: at any point in time, land can shake and fissure, water can swallow you whole, air can snap spines and crack backs of bodies—the Hawaiian people, the native Hawaiian people—are deeply connected to land and sea. There is a reverence and a full-bodied embrace of living. In a terrible and sorrowful world surrounded by opulent beauty, island people do not take life for granted. They recognize how temporary this all is. They risk delight. They face the unexpected.

We think about the space between ourselves and others and the spaces we invite ourselves into with this practice of curating ‘the unexpected’. We try to manifest magic. We try to create something akin to magic. Serendipity first appeared as a word in 1754 and originates from Horace Walpole, who in a letter to Horace Mann, remarked that in the fairy tale of *The Three Princes of Serendip* (Hodges Jamison, 1965), the brothers “were always making discoveries, by accidents and sagacity, of things they were not in quest of” (Walpole, 1754, American Heritage Dictionary), thus creating space for a new feeling: serendipity.

Marvelous. A charmed experienced. The ephemeral. Serendipity.

While we are living in a tremendously connected world, we still struggle to discern the difference between what is ‘real’ and ‘unreal’ in our interactions with people. We hold these moments of truth and honesty with tight fists, and squirrel them away to feed us in hungrier times.

It was co curator/performer Jon Sands who insisted that Audre Lorde's *A Litany for Survival* appear in our spontaneous performances. Lorde's words are prayer, comfort and promise:

“[F]or those of us who cannot indulge
the passing dreams of choice

who love in doorways coming and going
in the hours between dawns
looking inward and outward
at once before and after
seeking a now that can breed
futures
like bread in our children's mouths
so their dreams will not reflect
the death of ours..." (Lorde, 1978)

Perhaps that invocation is what led Jon to craft his own poem, investigating his relationships to spaces physical and personal, in his poem *The Shoreline* (2012):

"I am talking to the air with my entire body, and if I was waiting for the perfect time to say HowDoYouDo? If I was waiting for a flow chart to say Trust is a risk like poetry; for a sign to spark in the back of all these dreams that said, Jon, let it ride; to hit send until I already had a transcript of the reply——" (Sands, 2012)



And, on a rainy April Sunday night in a Montreal ATM vestibule, Jon recites these words and leans into the space, crowded with local folk and travelers, scattered like an archipelago, each an island but inseparable for this moment, the air bends, the space contracts and we are once again, Pangea.

•

In this work, *PUP, presenting poetry in unexpected public spaces*, the idea that feeds us as writers and performers is to animate poems so that they become a lived artistic experience. I suppose it is fair to say that we seek to awaken our unsuspecting audiences, the sleeping giants within our bodies that forgotten to feel and connect with the world, with space, with people around us. The moments are key. There is a risk in reaching out into a space hoping that the air will yield to your offering. We have seen this magic unfold twelvefold. Every space is unique.



Centering my body in the archway of an old, empty and shuttered church, a small gathering of locals shivered with a chilled Montreal wind on a Sunday night. I offer an old memory as poem, of a gay black man carefree and dancing, before the world shook and fissured beneath our feet:

“I still see him dancing
as I see him now in the helicopter,
surveying the wreck,
the smoldering heap of concrete,
charred steel, wires twisted and gnarled veins,
the shattered spine
of those magnificent buildings.” (McFadden, 2011)

How is that we got here so far past the beauty of watching a body flail and sway in light?
(McFadden, 2011) Time equal parts kind and cruel, yet the beauty of memory as poem is the opportunity relive an old story anew. When spoken out loud, we shift the public space, a new memory is born and communities are formed.

Auspicious.

We are sensitive to the energy in the spaces where we share poems. We listen to them and we listen to the people who share those spaces. Magic is chemistry, a collection of unlikely ingredients: light, sound, wall color, concrete, pavement, trees, pigeons, water fountains, a child’s insatiable joy, subway pole, motion, toasting pint glasses. These elements with the alchemy of voice, song, breath, page, dance, bass, squat, didgeridoo, violin, is how we make honey. We are listening more than we are simply speaking a poem into empty public spaces between bodies. We understand that we are entering, quite briefly, a relationship—a marriage—in that ephemeral connection we risk our vulnerability and hop at the end of the poems blooming from our bodies that everyone comes out loved, seen, and awake.

*

We’re standing outside of the bagel shop in one of the oldest parts of Montreal, and performer and co-curator Elana Bell is singing a love song as poem to Nina Simone, whose life in many ways instructs us in the marriage between art and activism, risk and vulnerability, the very seat of our humanity.

“Tireless quest for a justice you could hold in your hands
no more window washing

no more 'go slow'
and those pirates still ain't paid you your royalties yet.
not belonging anyplace
not America
not Africa
not the Caribbean
even your fruit bearing garden in the south of France
too small to hold that fireball rage.” (Bell, 2003)



I should note here that we aim to charm public spaces, and the air between ourselves and strangers. In these moments, we use song is a kind of permission and an opening. Elana charmed the air many times, collapsing all the spaces that separate us from strangers with a voice that delights and comforts. “Blossom on the tree, you know how I feel... It's a new dawn, it's a new

day, it's a new life... and I'm feeling good" (Bricusseand, Newley & Simone, 1965)

Could it stand to reason that our conception and understanding of art stems from recognizing our relationship to air and space between objects and bodies? Art can breathe. Art can be a lived thing, yes. We know that we are able to understand worlds, ideas, and images by adjusting our physical selves in relationship. We must make space for art in the world. We believe that we can make space for poems in the world; we believe that it is critical to make space for poems spoken out loud in the world. Jack Gilbert instructs us to "risk delight" in his poem *A Brief for the Defense* (2005):

"If we deny our happiness, resist our satisfaction,
we lessen the importance of their deprivation.
We must risk delight. We can do without pleasure,
but not delight. Not enjoyment. We must have
the stubbornness to accept our gladness in the ruthless
furnace of this world. To make injustice the only
measure of our attention is to praise the Devil." (Gilbert, 2005, p. 3)

We wonder aloud sometimes how good can manifest into action with a simple kind word. Beauty may enjoy our steady gaze but sometimes, she requires us to name the ways we witness her grace and acknowledge her humanity.

*

When we enter the local pub to begin our litcrawl at the end of the ACAQ Symposium, we were a little uncertain about how to make space to invite drinkers and late Sunday revelers into the ephemeral world of Poets in Unexpected Places. We understand the kind holy that exists in a semi public space where people take time to connect with their friends and neighbors in our busy and wildly complex world. Whatever intimacies exist between strangers in shared spaces, we do not wish to annoy or rankle, but only to encourage and nurture a willing listener in the passing chance of meeting poem and reflection. We are deliberately practicing a kind of serendipity, if such a thing can be true. Though I never read *The Three Princes of Serendip* (Hodges Jamison, 1965), I would wager that those *bonhommes* were consciously creating opportunities for discoveries and bridges between known and unknown worlds. I would wager that their chance meetings were able to proceed in part because their eyes and hearts were open;

they believed in a something akin to magic. Poetry can be that unlocking, that kind of magic that butterflies in the belly, spills out in song, blooms with the right ordering of words to render emotion, the imperceptible into a body that occupies space, awaken some faint memory. It is curator and performer Samantha Thornhill who takes the opening spot to charm the air, the room, and the beer and whiskey drinkers in this bar on a Sunday night in Montreal.

“Now everywhere
I go I see the people I love in the faces of strangers, clinging to this story of this
preacher and his wife
the way her body clung to that truck. At that moment I understood the paradox
of the human struggle;
sometimes, the same thing that slowly kills us is exactly the thing keeping us alive.”
(Thornhill, 2003)

It is the warm timbre of her voice that awakens a sleepy yet attentive crowd, the air bends, and space collapses. We watch this alchemical process unfold. Beauty nods, ears open, the air bends, the space between us shrinks. The crowd is moved. The unexpected embraced.

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Biography

SYREETA MCFADDEN is one of the founding editors of the online literary magazine *Union Station* and a co-curator of Poets in Unexpected Places. She is a regular contributor to The Guardian and her writing has appeared in the New York Times, BuzzFeed, Feministing, The Huffington Post, Storyscape Journal, and others. She has appeared on NPR's *On The Media* and *Tell Me More*, and Sirius XM Radio's *Make It Plain*. A former urban planner, she holds degrees from Columbia University and Sarah Lawrence College. She is an adjunct professor of English and Humanities, and is currently writing collections of short stories and essays.

36. L'ESPACE URBAIN EST UN UNIVERS DE RÉCITS : fragments narratifs du paysage olfactif montréalais / THE URBAN SPACE IS A WORLD OF STORIES: narrative fragments of the Montreal smellscape

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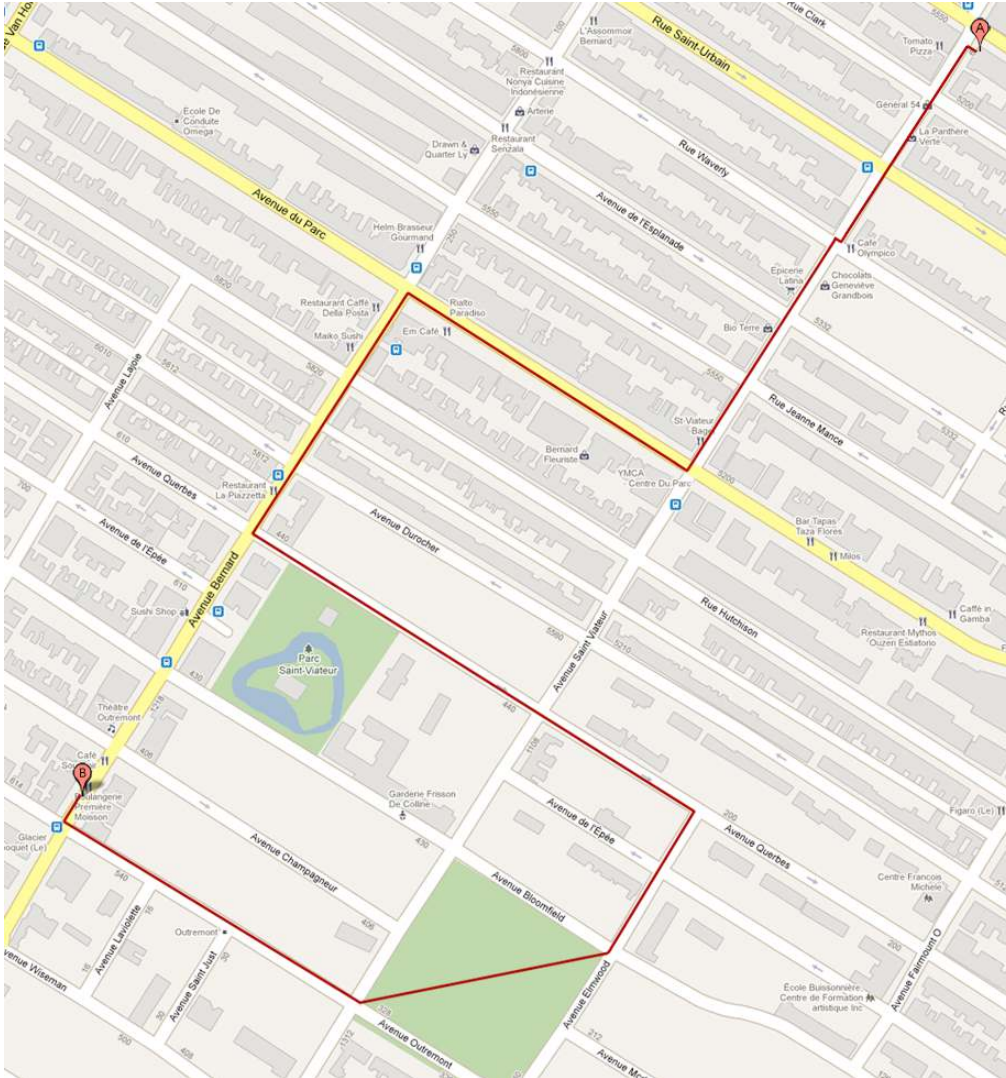
Résumé: La réalité de l'environnement est modelée par le terrain mouvant de notre mémoire qui encode nos expériences, nos rencontres et autres complexes associations vécues en différents lieux (Halbwachs, 1976; Lynch, 1999). Ce que nous avons senti, pensé, voulu depuis notre naissance influence notre perception du présent. Nous nous mouvons ainsi parmi des relations (Bergson, 1946). Traçant une topographie mobile et intangible l'incessant flux des odeurs exerce une emprise significative sur notre perception. En effet, les odeurs, qui occupent un espace de propagation qui a une certaine qualité dans l'instant, appellent des repères spatio-temporels précis (Plailly, 2005) qui se réfèrent à des événements que l'on a personnellement vécus. Nous parcourons donc l'espace en traversant des lieux passés ou futurs que notre mémoire met en scène au présent en réaction aux différents stimuli olfactifs. Ces paysages temporels, qui constituent le répertoire de ce que nous appelons le théâtre de la mémoire olfactive, sont autant de possibilités de restructurer le réel de l'individu. Avec l'objectif de réfléchir à *comment susciter l'intérêt, la participation du public pour les formes nouvelles de performances mettant en scène l'environnement?* nous avons alors amené l'auditoire du Symposium ACAQ sur le terrain, pour un parcours participatif sur la piste des odeurs.

Texte

1. La réalité de l'environnement est modelée par le terrain mouvant de notre mémoire qui encode nos expériences, nos rencontres et autres associations vécues à différents moments (Halbwachs, 1976; Lynch, 1999). Sa géométrie est statique mais il est sans cesse inondé par différentes ambiances qui elles sont dynamiques. / The reality of the environment is shaped by the unstable ground of our memory, which encodes our experiences, our meetings and other associations lived at different moments. Its geometry is static but is constantly flooded by various atmospheres, which are dynamic.
2. Traçant une topographie mobile et intangible, les odeurs altèrent notre perception de la structure temporelle et spatiale de l'environnement (Bouchard, 2013). Car notre mémoire dessine des espaces passés ou futurs dans le moment présent. Et ces paysages temporels, qui constituent le répertoire du théâtre de la mémoire olfactive, sont autant de possibilités pour le designer urbain de restructurer le réel de l'individu. / The multiple fluxes of smells creating a mobile and intangible topography in the city alter our perception of the spatio-temporal structure of the environment. As such, our memory draws past and future spaces in the

present moment. And these *timescapes*, which constitute the Theater of Olfactory Memory repertoire, offer great opportunities to urban designers to restructure the reality of the individual.

3. Pour conduire une recherche sur le pouvoir des odeurs à modeler notre perception spatio-temporelle de l'environnement, nous avons utilisé une méthode qui permet la mise en récit en temps réel d'un trajet : le parcours commenté. Adoptant une approche socio-anthropologique qui s'efforce de pénétrer la logique de l'individu, nous avons combiné cette méthode à un outil permettant de représenter visuellement la pensée du participant : la carte mentale. / To conduct research on the power of odors to shape our spatio-temporal perception of the environment, we used a method that allows the real-time narrative of a route: the commented course. Adopting a socio-anthropological approach striving to penetrate the logic of the individual, we combined this method with a tool that allowed us to represent the thought of the participant: the mental map.
4. Cette enquête s'est étendue durant trois saisons : hiver, printemps et été 2012. Notre intention était d'obtenir un éventail le plus complet possible du paysage olfactif. Car celui-ci peut varier grandement entre les saisons bien définies du Québec. Chaque participant a ainsi effectué son trajet sous des conditions climatiques et des températures variées, de même qu'à des heures différentes. / The survey extended during three seasons: winter, spring, and summer 2012. Our intention was to obtain the most complete possible range of the smellscape. Because it may in fact vary greatly between the well-defined seasons we have in Quebec. Thereby, each of the participants made his or her route under varied weather conditions and temperatures, as well as at different time of the day.
5. Prenant en moyenne 35 minutes à compléter à pied, le parcours, tracé à la confluence des arrondissements du Plateau-Mont-Royal et d'Outremont, permettait la rencontre d'une variété d'odeurs de même que différents types d'espaces urbains. Nous avons ainsi pu récolter de nos participants une diversité d'expressions. / Taking approximately thirty-five minutes to complete on foot, the route, drawn at the confluence of the districts of Plateau-Mont-Royal and Outremont, allowed participants to meet with a variety of smells as well as various types of urban spaces. This allowed us to harvest a diverse range of expressions from our participants.
6. Le tracé du parcours / The path of the course:



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7. L'importante somme de données orales récoltées nous ont amené à mettre en scène graphiquement la perception du participant sur le territoire. Tel un univers de récits, chaque parcours prend ainsi la forme d'une affiche grand format exposant la relation intime qui se construit entre l'individu et l'espace qu'il perçoit. La compilation de ces parcours a révélé différents niveaux de réalités vécus pour un même territoire, ainsi qu'une mémoire olfactive collective. / The oral data collected allowed us to graphically represent the perceptions and memories of the participants. Thereby, like a universe of narratives, the result of the course takes the form of large format posters exposing the intimate relationship that is built between the individual and the space he or she perceives. The compilation of these routes revealed that the participants experienced various levels of realities for a same territory, as well as a collective olfactory memory.

8. Voici un extrait de deux parcours, l'un exprimé en français, l'autre en anglais. / Here is an excerpt of two courses, one in French and the other in English:

participant #10-OP
 age: 34 sex: M
 ethnic group:
 latino (Mexican)
 departure time: 18:23
 date: 07/08/2011
 season: summer
 weather: light rain
 • 23°C
 • wind N-19km/h
 • 78% humidity level
 spoke in English →

participant #07-ET
 âge: 53 sexe: F
 groupe ethnique:
 Québécoise (née au QC)
 heure de départ: 20:04
 date: 07/06/2011
 saison: printemps
 météo: ensoleillé
 • 27°C
 • vent SO-17km/h
 • 42% taux d'humidité
 s'exprime en français →

right now I don't smell anything.
pas évident de ne pas se laisser influencer par les sons ou par ce que je vois...

that small smell reminded me of Mexico City. Like being downtown. I don't know why. Probably because of the pollution of the cars.
rien de particulier sauf un fond d'humidité.

again, that car pollution smell. It reminds me of a city.
encore! c'est dommage! une bonne odeur de poulet et encore la cigarette qui est derrière. Ça me défait toute le plaisir de cette senteur-là.

toujours les mêmes odeurs d'une soirée chaude, lourde... humide... ça me fait penser à des gouttelettes.

that smell reminded me of wood, all wood. Yes. Basically wood. Yes.
I can smell some perfume. It reminds me of being inside a mall, where you have all the cosmetics. Probably the women over there have perfume.

ici ça sent la grande ville : l'essence, la chaleur, l'humidité.
there was a very small smell that reminded me of breakfast.

ca sentait comme du poulet grillé. Un oncle dans la famille avait une des premières rôtisseries à St-Jerôme. J'avais toujours plaisir d'aller manger mon poulet BBQ au Coq d'Or. Je remonte à longtemps! Des beaux souvenirs ça.

that smell reminded me of bread.
y'avait j'sais pas quoi là... aah! le café! oh! avec la cigarette, dé-gueu-lasse! c'est deux odeurs mélangées : superbe de café et l'fond de cendrier. Ça sentait comme des "botchs" de cigarette dans un seau avec de l'eau... quand t'ouvre ça ouach!

that smell I don't know but, it reminded me of... I don't know. I know that smell...
il y a quelque chose d'épicé là... cumin... ça me rappelle, voilà plusieurs années, d'avoir découvert la bouffe indienne avec de supers bons amis. On avait fait un festin incroyable dans un restaurant sur Sainte-Catherine. On avaient mangé mangé, comme des cochons!

ah! le dépanneur. Ça sentait pas les poubelles mais quasiment. Ça sentait comme des légumes compostés.
j'sais pas c'était quoi là... le levain peut-être? ah! c'est ça, une boulangerie! mais ça sentait pas le pain. Ça sentait très fort. C'était probablement ça, le levain.

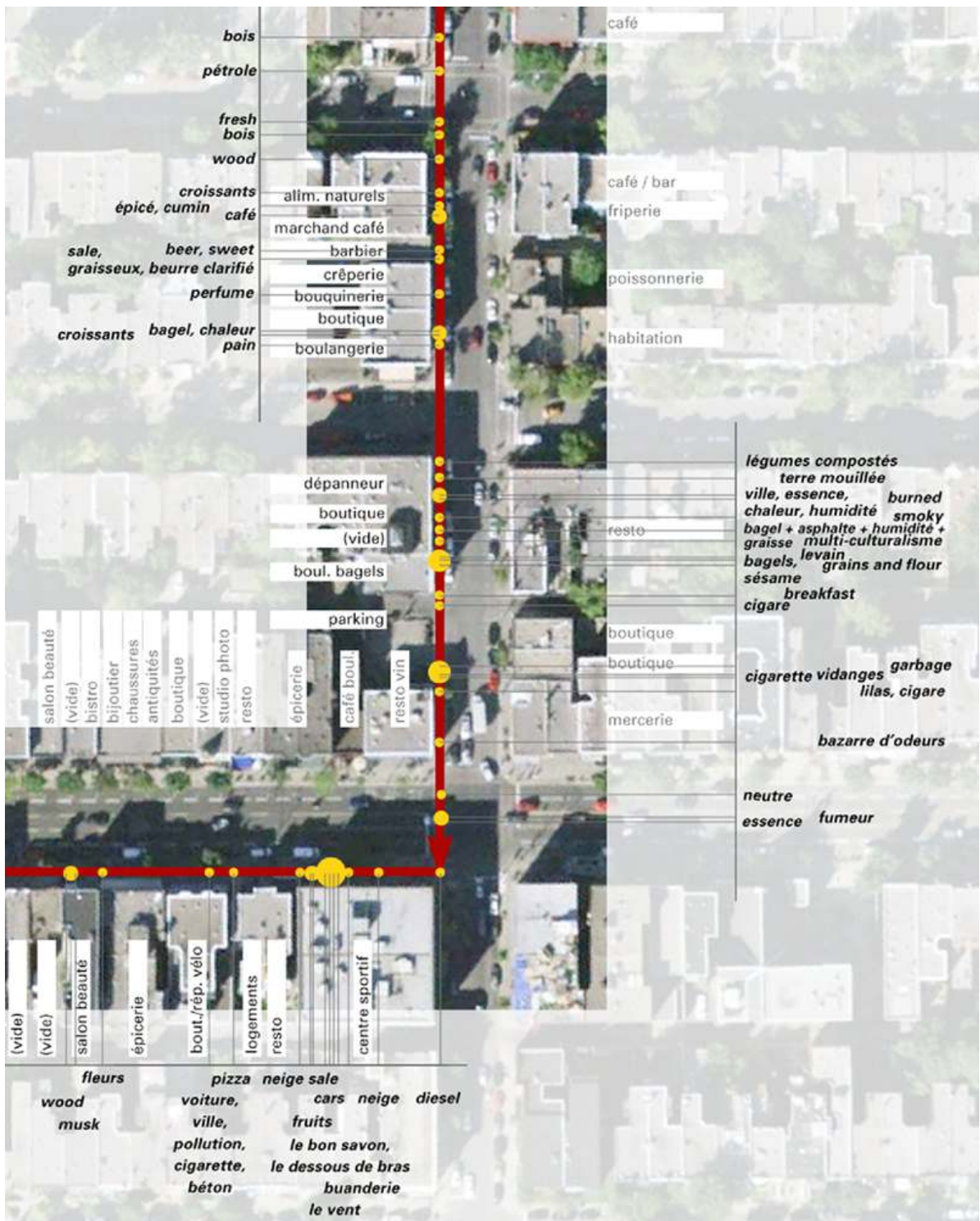
j'aurais aimé que ça sente l'épinette ou le sapin (en passant devant un bosquet d'arbustes).
encore la cigarette! J'la sens de loin celle-là. C'est une odeur qui m'est agressive, qui me rappelle probablement quand j'ai arrêté de fumer y'a plusieurs années, c'était tellement pénible...

non, rien de spécial comme odeur.

ah! ça sent la banane! c'est drôle, l'odeur de banane semble prendre le dessus sur les autres odeurs. Être jeune, prendre une banane et l'écraser avec une fourchette, jusqu'à ce qu'elle soit vraiment écrasée. C'est tellement bon une banane écrasée! Ça me donne envie de manger un sorbet au banane et aux bleuets (rires).
I can smell fruits. It reminds me of a market, but not a closed market, an open market. And most especially it brings the picture of a lettuce to my mind (laughs).

c'est tout mélangé ici, autant des odeurs de compost que de petits pains. Ah! le pain... hop! l'odeur de cigarette défait tout!
again, the smell of wood.
une odeur de drap que tu mets sur une corde (à linges), ça sent tellement bon et frais qu'on dirait que le soleil est dans ton drap.

9. Ici un extrait de la compilation finale des données récoltées. / Here an excerpt of the final compilation of the data harvested:



10. Suite à cette recherche, et avec l'idée de rendre possible l'archivage de la mémoire olfactive collective liée aux différents quartiers de Montréal, nous avons démarré différents projets autour de la question suivante : *comment susciter l'intérêt et la participation du citoyen pour des formes nouvelles de performances mettant en scène l'environnement ?* / Following our study, and with the idea to make possible the archiving of the collective olfactory memory associated to each districts of Montreal, we started various projects around the following question: how could we arouse the interest and the participation of the citizen for new forms of performances staging the environment?

11. La ville est une succession de moments. L'expérience qu'on peut y avoir dépend de l'environnement, de la suite des événements qui s'y déroulent et du souvenir d'expériences passées ^(Lynch, 1999). Pour comprendre et assimiler les signaux qu'il analyse, notre intellect travaille à partir d'images dérivées de nos impressions sensorielles. Pour ce qui est du paysage olfactif plus particulièrement, la difficulté à nommer ce que notre nez sent nous force à utiliser une expression évocative pour communiquer une odeur. Aussi, lié à des moments, des lieux, le champ sémantique olfactif est défini dans le temps et l'espace (Engen & Lawless, 1977). / The city is a succession of moments. The experience that we may have is dependent on the environment, the sequence of events that take place, and the memory of past experiences. To understand and assimilate the signals that it analyzes, our intellect works from images derived of our sensory impressions. Pertaining more specifically to the smellscape, the difficulty in naming what our nose smells forces us to use an evocative expression to communicate a smell. Therefore, the olfactory semantic field is defined by the unique moments we experience in time and space.

12. Pour le Symposium ACAQ, nous avons organisé une activité similaire à celle que nous avons présenté dans le cadre de l'événement Lire MTL 2013 :

Vous êtes invité à une excursion urbaine qui vous entraînera sur les traces du paysage olfactif du quartier Saint-Henri. Sur la piste des odeurs, il faudra suivre le trajet indiqué sur la carte qui vous sera remise. Sur cette carte, notez toutes images et/ou les scénarios qui surgissent à votre esprit lorsque vous rencontrez une odeur et faite un point à l'endroit ou vous la percevez. À la fin du parcours toutes les cartes seront réunies et une discussion suivra. L'excursion aura lieu indépendamment des conditions climatiques. (Lire Montreal, 2013)

/ For the ACAQ symposium, we organized an activity similar to the one that we presented within the framework of Lire MTL 2013 summer event:

You are invited to a ramble in time via the smellscape of Saint-Henri district. On the trail of smells, you will follow a specific route using a map. On this map, note all images and / or scenarios that arise in your mind when you encounter a smell, and indicate by a point the place where you perceived each of them. At the end, all maps will be compiled and we will have an exchange about the experience. The excursion will take place independently of the climatic conditions.¹

13. Voici la carte remise aux participants au début de l'activité. / Here is the map handed to the participants at the beginning of the activity:

Le théâtre de la mémoire olfactive
St-Henri (Montréal)

instructions :
Sur la piste des odeurs, suivez le parcours tracé en respectant le bon côté du trottoir. Partez du point A, vous devez vous rendre au point B.
En essayant de ne pas vous laisser influencer par ce que vous voyez :
1- indiquez par un point sur la ligne du parcours les endroits où vous sentez une odeur
2- liez ce point à une brève description de l'image ou scénario qui vous vient spontanément en tête à ce moment-là (un mot, une phrase)
3- notez l'espace-temps dans lequel l'odeur vous a amené — passé (souvenir), présent (nouveau!), futur (anticipation)
Les points blancs qui se trouvent sur le chemin tracé sont des endroits d'arrêt où vous devez noter ce que vous percevez (odeur + image + espace-temps)
Une rencontre / discussion aura lieu à la fin du parcours.
Dans le but de constituer une carte représentant l'univers des lieux olfactifs de Montréal nous espérons recueillir vos cartes à la fin. Libre à vous de nous la laisser ou non. Si vous acceptez, veuillez remplir ce qui suit :

nom : _____
 sexe : F M âge : _____
 Je consens à ce que les données recueillies dans le cadre de cette expérience urbaine soient utilisées à des fins de recherche et / ou de production artistique subséquentes.
 signature : _____
 date : _____
 email : _____



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14. Désirant pousser plus loin notre exploration, et ce tout en nous adressant toujours à un public varié, nous avons développé un autre projet lié au *Théâtre de la mémoire olfactive*. Tel un comptoir de dépôt digital accessible en ligne, [@smellstories](https://smellstories.com) se veut ainsi une ressource disponible à chacun désirant archiver les instants qu'il a vécu avec les odeurs. / Wishing to develop this exploration further, and in order to continue addressing a varied public, we linked another project to the *Theater of the Olfactory Memory*, entitled [@smellstories](https://smellstories.com): an on-line *digital counter*, which serves as an archived of olfactory memories, where participants can deposit the moments they have lived with certain smells.²
15. Bref, les projets que nous avons développés jusqu'à aujourd'hui et qui nous ont permis d'explorer l'espace urbain en compagnie d'un public participant nous amènent à dire que :

celle/celui désirant modeler des formes nouvelles de *performances* mettant en scène l'environnement, si il/elle doit composer avec les éléments climatiques et autres tissus d'ambiances qui rendent le medium mobile, doit parvenir également à manier la perception dynamique de son public pour cet espace. Toute mise en scène devenant ainsi à chaque *représentation* la vibration particulière du lieu, du moment et de son public. / In summary, the projects that we have developed so far and that allowed us to explore the urban space together with public participants, bring us to the following conclusion: the one wishing to shape new forms of performances staging the environment—as it has to deal with climate elements and other ambient fabrics which make the medium mobile—must also succeed in handling the dynamic perception of his public for this space. As such, any staging in performance becomes a reflection of the particular vibration of that place, moment, and public.

¹ This quote can be found at Lire Montreal (2013), and was translated from French by the author.

² Please visit <http://smellstories.tumblr.com> for more information.

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Biographie

Natalie B s'intéresse aux différents niveaux de réalité de l'environnement : modulations spatiales, paysages temporels, flux olfactifs, territoires mnémiques et modèles architecturaux d'états mentaux. Ses productions prennent différentes formes. Elle détient un baccalauréat en design de l'environnement, option Architecture (UQAM / University of Strathclyde), ainsi qu'une maîtrise en aménagement (Université de Montréal). Son mémoire de maîtrise porte sur *le pouvoir des odeurs à modeler notre perception spatiotemporelle de l'environnement*. Elle est membre de l'ADUQ (Association du Design Urbain du Québec), de l'ADIQ (Association des Designers Industriels du Québec), et de l'Institut royal d'architecture du Canada (MIRAIC). / Natalie B is an independent researcher and designer interested in the hidden structures of reality: spatial modulations, timescapes, smell fluxes, mindscapes and architectural models of mental states. Her work spans across various mediums and takes place in the fields of Urban Design, Environmental Planning and Narrative Architecture. She was awarded a B.A. in Environmental Design (Université du Québec à Montréal) with a minor in Architecture (University of Strathclyde, Glasgow UK), and a M.Sc.A. in Planning (Université de Montréal). Her thesis is about *the power of the smells to trigger various spatio-temporalities in the environment*. She is a member of Quebec Association of Urban Designers (ADUQ), Quebec Association of Industrial Designers (ADIQ), and the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (MIRAIC).

37. ARC.HIVE of Contemporary Arab Performing Arts: Memory, Catastrophe, Resistance and Oblivion¹

Adham Hafez

Abstract: The ARC.HIVE of Contemporary Arab Performing Arts is a project that aims at documenting the creations of contemporary dance, music, theatre and performance from Arab artists, in physical and digital environments. The project consists of three separate preservation sites, in Cairo, New York and Cologne, and a body of activities that gives birth to material as much as it unearths and frames existing material. ARC.HIVE is a two-fold project, an ARC that carries knowledge that is disappearing or that has never been part of major collections and documentation projects. And a “HIVE” that generates new knowledge, information, and artistic creations through research, production and dissemination.

ARC.HIVE was initiated and produced by HaRaKa (Cairo), and operates as a longterm project documenting contemporary dance, theatre, music and performance from Arab artists. HaRaKa is the outreach and research platform set up by the Adham Hafez Company in 2006, and leads discursive projects in Egypt, and the Arabic speaking region since then. It is Egypt's only platform dedicated to research in dance and performance.

The Arabic speaking region is a part of the world that rises in our horizon with the revolts in Tunis, wars in Iraq, or the pan-national summits on the future of the Palestinian Israeli conflict. It does not emerge onto our horizons because of artistic trends in Beirut, aesthetic ruptures in Damascene theatres, Cairo's underground electronic music scene or Moroccan contemporary dance festivals. For many citizens in this world, the aforementioned region is a violent mystery. The so-called 'West' (which is just as geographically challenging to locate as the Middle East is), the 'West' does not remember the last time Arabs danced, but remember wars on terror in the search for holy-petroleum. While this sounds like dark humour, it is a detail that contains a lot of the current political turmoil in and of itself. And, while readers reading this text can perhaps name five choreographers from Europe or the USA, how many Arab choreographers can they name? How many Classical Arabic Music composers can they name? How many Arab cities under attack, war and revolt do they remember? What is Saltana, and what is Tarab?

To be an artist living in Egypt now, is to be an artist facing oblivion daily, and facing the possibility of annihilation physically and conceptually. Not only are bodies on Tahrir Square threatened, but their knowledge, libraries and theatres are equally threatened. The fragility of architecture that cares about memory is saddening. The fragility of libraries, of theatres, of

temples, of shrines. The fragility of bodies that remember and speak. Bodies of flesh, or bodies of wood and stone

The Khedivial Opera House (the old Cairo Opera House) was inaugurated in the late 1800's, celebrating the new 'Suez Canal' opening. Verdi's *Aida* was commissioned for this historical feat. The National Theatre was also built in the late 1800s; an architectural gem in the Belle-Epoque Downtown Cairo, as part of the Ismailian project of establishing a 'Paris Sur Nil'. Paris by the Nile was the name given to that old new Cairo, born out of Khedive Ismail's interest in a new Egypt that is modern, multicultural and beautiful. A reinvented and displaced Hausmannian fantasy. One hundred years before those two theatres were established, the *Institut D'Egypte* was built in Egypt, under the orders of Napoleon. It was the oldest scientific society outside of Europe. All aforementioned buildings were set on fire between 1971 and 2011. Within those forty years, Egypt's memory was being evacuated gradually. Sold in black markets, or left to rot in an abandoned building. Forty years that witnessed the shifts of alliances, the fall of the Socialist regimes, Arab wars, fall of walls and empires, Camp David, and the Arab Spring. All aforementioned events are perhaps products of one system of world-governance.

And, while Egypt's history is grand, grandiose beauty does not stop a fire. The Cairo Opera House was burnt in 1971, set on fire on its four corners at the same time. The Cairo Opera House that was being eaten by the flames was on the same square as the central firefighters headquarter was. The National Theatre was burnt in 2008, eaten by the flames on that very same square, across the street from the central firefighters headquarter. In 2011, on December 17th and 18th, the building of the *Institut D'Egypte* was set on fire—always by unknown forces—and was left to burn. I stood there with colleagues from work, volunteers who met on that very day and formed together an action group called *Save The Books*. Books were being extracted from the building, and within massive vehicles transported to the 'National Archives', to be dried and vacuum-sealed in the buildings vaults. Possibly the only way to save the burning documents was to shroud them in plastic, and bury them in the belly of the monstrous 'National Archives'; where a police unit is there keeping track of who reads what in a large notation log book by the gates.

To protect is to shroud, hide, and bury, sometimes. The thought of the inevitable death of these books, through invisibility or through annihilation was a violently poetic reminder of the state of what we produce as Arab performing artists. Our material will die, inevitably, through the fallen infrastructure of disseminating and presenting Arab contemporary performance, through falling into oblivion as ideological governments pass through their ruptures ever more, and through direct attacks and orchestrated destruction leaving nothing but ashes and a few oral memories behind.

In December 2011, the ARC.HIVE of Contemporary Arab Performing Arts was articulated to its team—by the crisis—as a necessity and as an emergency. The fine line between resistance and research was porous. The project team started to collect material in all possible forms, from Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Tunis, Palestine, Jordan. There were no archives that said: “Arabs also danced. They sang, and they wrote theatre”. But, there were always archives that generated fear, xenophobia, orientalist curiosities fed by regimes of terror and ignorance of others. The task was to create a two unit archival project, situated on three continental sites to protect the material as much as possible, and to disseminate the material as widely as possible. HaRaKa (the research platform leading the project) set up a working space in Cairo to collect, catalogue, and digitize the material. New York's Performing Arts Library of the Lincoln Centre would be the first partner receiving material for public viewing, followed by the German Dance Archives in Cologne. Cairo would conceive of a 'hub' for ARC.HIVE, which would be central and accessible, for the material to be present and visible within the Arabic Speaking Region's capital of cultural production and historic institutions.

But, what does any of this have to do with curatorial practices? Everything! The project ARC.HIVE was not only born out of the state of emergency of the previous three years in Egypt, and other Arab countries. The project came to provide solutions to discourse blind spots and contextual problematics when dealing with contemporary performance from Arab artists. The world of publications, academia and production of contemporary theatre, dance and music remains to be Eurocentric and American-centric, as much as we would all wish to believe we have bypassed that moment. References that inform such initiatives and organizations are strictly European and North American, even within festivals—for instance—that program

Arab art. The answer is not to essentialize Arab art. It is to shift it outside of the gaze that essentializes it, rendering it obscure, kitsch or obsolete. With the absolute lack of non-Arabic publications dedicated to Arab performing arts, and the lack of academic programs that teach about the history of Arab performance, there are truly no chances to be informed on the specificities and contextual information that frames such material: Arab contemporary performances.

ARC.HIVE's aim—or better described as a dream—is to save the material from oblivion, and directly move it into visibility and friction, hoping for intelligibility and inter-comprehension. The project produces the possibility of research, for curatorial practices as much as for academic research that focuses on Arab performing arts. To achieve this, ARC.HIVE runs a publications project under the name *Cairography*, that bilingually (English and Arabic) publishes and translates texts that shape the critical and aesthetic landscapes we operate within, in the world(s) of contemporary performing arts. It has translated and published so far works including texts by renowned thinkers and performance scholars; Professor Dr. Ramsay Burt (UK), Dr. Myriam Van Imschoot (Belgium), Dr. Abdullah Al-Bayyari (Palestine/ Egypt), Dr. Andre Lepecki (Portugal), among many others. *Cairography* aims at revealing the complexity of those critical and aesthetic landscapes, to further highlight the necessity of updating our 'curatorial gazes'.

While publications aim at a particular readership, and hence a particular 'demography', the project ARC.HIVE also produces artistic encounters for the larger audience. In this direction, the archive wishes to activate itself through adopting a curatorial role that produces panels, public performances, rehearsals and studio visits, or other forms that maybe fragile or institutional. Here, we can see that the project is interested in displacing archival practices into the world of production of culture, and hence it deals with policy. To raise the institutional or financial support for public presentations produced by an archive, one stands on many vectors, some do not intersect easily. The archive invites people into its 'mission' rather than only into its shelves and digital files on hard drive. The space of the archive happens outside of the archive, the way its concern is larger than its physical size. The city, the building, the institutions

involved, or the artistic collectives and companies become the space and form the space for that mission to continue unfolding, and to continue changing in order for it to survive.

ARC.HIVE of Contemporary Arab Performing Arts is perhaps a long poetic research process. It is an impossible list of tasks that activate latent questions on constructing meaning, on artistic values within academia and markets, on languages (corporeal, verbal, institutional, or other) and constitutive acts: curating. The large-scale trans-continental project is humble, and is subtle. It departs from a servile position aiming to provide missing material, to compliment stories through other stories that are equally vital and relevant, and to think of our world as a mesh. It is a host and a guest all at once. At its core, ARC.HIVE is a constitutive act and a curious dialogue at a time of catastrophes.

¹ This is a paper that was prepared for the ACAQ Symposium but was not presented in the end because of an emergency cancellation.

© Adham Hafez

Biography

Adham Hafez is a choreographer, composer, performer and theorist, working between Cairo, Berlin and New York. Awarded for his choreographic work, and music composition, his work has been presented widely in the Arabic Speaking Region, and in Europe. Founder of HaRaKa, Cairography and Adham Hafez Company. He continues to work in Cairo directing the International Festival for Contemporary Dance and Performance “TransDance”. Adham Hafez received his MA degree in Choreography from the Amsterdam Theatre School (Netherlands), and currently studies political science at the reputable SciencePo School (Paris), for a Master degree in 'political experimentation'. His upcoming production *2065 BC* premieres on the stage of HAU Theater (Berlin), March 2015, revisiting the colonialist history shared between Africa and Europe in a radical multimedia choreographic performance.