2000

Acts of Writing: Writings on Contemporary Performance

ALLSOPP, RICHARD DAVID

http://hdl.handle.net/10026.1/2671

Acts of Writing:

Writings on Contemporary Performance

by

RICHARD DAVID ALLSOPP

A Thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth

in partial fulfillment of the degree of

DOCTOR of PHILOSOPHY

by Staff Candidature on the basis of Published Works

Dartington College of Arts

July 2000

List of Contents:

♦♦♦♦♦♦

Section 3:   Editorials

♦♦♦♦♦♦

Section 4:   Performance Texts

♦♦♦♦♦♦

Section 5:   Documentation:

♦♦♦♦♦♦

Declaration:

The following work draws on a field of enquiry into contemporary performance that I have been engaged with in various capacities since the early 1970s. The recent published works here submitted are the result of a number of interrelationships with contemporary performance - as researcher, as lecturer, as editor and as writer/ practitioner - which have primarily been enabled by the Fellowships and Lectureships that I have held at Dartington College of Arts since 1992. The work represents a focused 'multiple practice' in the field of contemporary performance and as such necessarily has a number of different starting points and contexts for the research which can be broadly identified as follows:

1. Visiting and Senior Lectureships at Dartington College of Arts:

My association with, and research in the area of writing, textuality and performance started with my undergraduate studies in theatre at Dartington (1976-80) specialising in 'writing for performance' which continued as an area of research and practice in my appointment as Lecturer in Theatre at Dartington from 1984-90. During 1992- 94 I was involved as a consultant in the design and subsequent validation of the present Performance Writing degree and taught on the course as a Visiting Lecturer from 1994 -7. From 1997-2000 I have been a fractional Senior Lecturer on·the Performance Writing course. This experience has (particularly since 1996) enabled the research for a number of writings which directly address issues of performance and textuality.

2. Research Fellowships at Dartington College of Arts.

My Research Fellowships at Dartington - firstly from 1994 - 96, and subsequently from 1997 to the present - have enabled me to continue my research in the field of contemporary performance in a number of different ways: in relation to practical and theoretical teaching across the undergraduate programme (in the areas of Performance Writing, Theatre and Visual Performance); in relation to conferences, seminars and workshops both in the UK and in continental Europe; in relation to the development of my own practice as an artist; and in

4
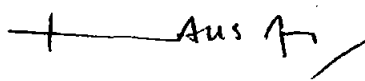
relation to my editorial work as co-founding editor of 'Performance Research' from 1995 to the present. This experience has enabled the research for writings concerned with wider issues in contemporary performance - particularly published conference and seminar papers, 'pedagogical' texts and performance texts.

3. Joint Editorship of 'Performance Research' :

My work as co-founding and joint editor of this thematically based, international peer-reviewed journal on contemporary performance has largely been enabled by the Research Fellowships that I have held at Dartington College of Arts since 1994. The contexts for research that the work of the journal has created, as well as the contexts opened through the national and international networks of individual artists, institutions, and theorists involved in contemporary performance practice that the journal participates in, have enabled the research for writings that are primarily review-based and editorial, but which extend discourses surrounding contemporary practice.

Having effectively divided the work into categories of research writing rather than a chronological progression of works, it is perhaps necessary to state that the 'where and when' of the research undertaken to produce this body of published work is part of a multiple practice that is perhaps best described as spatialised rather than linear in its approaches to a focused and coherent body of research into contemporary performance practice. The published output here submitted is my original work [except for collaborations on two editorial pieces - see below] and has not been submitted in whole or in part for any other Higher Degree at the University of Plymouth or elsewhere. In addition one article 'Ephemera' [see Section 1 below] is due to be published within this calendar year (2000) and I attach a letter from the editor of this article to that effect [see p.6 below]. I declare that the 1996 'Introduction' to The Connected Body? ed. R.Allsopp & S.DeLahunta, Amsterdam: AHK [see Section 3: Editorials] is substantially my own work; and similarly that the 2000 Editorial (with David Williams) in 'Openings', Performance Research Vol.5, No.1 London: Routledge is also substantially my own work.

Ric Allsopp, MA, BA (Hons).
Dartington College of Arts - July 2000

Abstract:

Richard David Allsopp / Acts of Writing: Writings on Contemporary Performance

The work published between 1992 - 2000 and presented here forms a continuing meditation on, and exploration of contemporary performance. The term 'contemporary performance' is used to refer to practices and discourses in the performance arts that have occurred over the last decade. There is a particular emphasis on those unstable, hybrid and interdisciplinary areas of performance (including performance art, installation, 'new' dance, 'experimental' theatre, 'live' art) which resist easy definition or categorisation, and which may be further characterised as postmodern in the sense of a reflexive, contextualised and knowingly problematic practice.

More specifically the work builds a sustained thesis on contemporary practice and addresses in a number ways some of the central issues surrounding the placing and practice of performance. It focuses on relationships between performance, textuality, the body, and spatiality; as well as on issues of context, framing and the place of performance in contemporary culture. The work engages with a number key terms applied to contemporary performance including ephemerality, displacement, equivalence and ecology, which contribute to the central thesis that contemporary performance is an unsettled yet always contextualised practice which resists fixities and holds itself between a condition of fragmentation and integration.

.

Contemporary performance is considered from a number of points of view:

> • as performance: where the events and relationships which constitute performance can be documented and mapped;
>
> • as contextualised practice: where the conditions that enable or disable performance can be identified;
>
> • as process : where the dynamics and media of performance can be situated;
>
> • as site : where the frames, surfaces and boundaries of performance can be examined;

• as ecology: where the Internal and external Interdependencies of performance can be identified;

• as a problematic: where the terms and assumptions that constitute a reading of performance can be identified and analysed.

Two key Ideas Inform the thesis that emerges from the work: firstly the recognition of an ethical stance towards performance; and secondly the search for a methodology which can disclose the dynamics of performance. The 'acts of writing' are seen as an active as well as reflective methodology - an engagement with the event of performance understood as a located, contextualised practice. The published work presented here sets out some of the underlying conditions and methodologies from which my work In the field of contemporary performance proceeds.

As a thesis it provides sustained evidence of a 'multiple practice' - that is a set of practices and engagements in the field of research that explore what might be termed the 'ecology' of contemporary performance from various positions. This multiple practice is a way of locating the work and of attempting to realise an ethical stance towards performance. The recognition that the conditions of contemporary performance depend on an interdependency of contexts and that performance situates itself as an unstable catalyst that oscillates between these contexts has enabled me to locate my research Into contemporary performance In the variety of ways evidenced by the published output collected here.

◆◆◆◆◆◆

'Ephemera' is to be published as ' Dissertazione su tre lettere e tre ephemera' by Bulzoni Editore: Roma in <u>Biblioteca Teatrale</u>, 'La crisi della critica teatrale' ed. V.Valentini (2000).

UNIVERSITA' DEGLI STUDI DELLA CALABRIA
FACOLTA' DI LETTERE E FILOSOFIA
DIPARTIMENTO DELLE ARTI

87036 ARCAVACATA DI RENDE (Cosenza) - Cubo 12
TEL. (0984) 494314 (centralino) Segret. amm. 494315
(0984) 494316 (Direzione) fax 494313

Codice Fiscale 80003950781

Io, Valentina Valentini, curatrice del numero di *Biblioteca Teatrale* "La crisi della critica teatrale" di prossima pubblicazione,

dichiaro che,

il saggio di Ric Allsopp, "Dissertazione su tre lettere e tre ephemera", è stato accettato per la pubblicazione nel numero di *Biblioteca Teatrale* di cui sopra, che sarà pubblicato entro l'anno 2000 per conto di Bulzoni Editore, Via dei Liburni 14 - 00185 Roma, Italia - Tel. +39 06 4455207.

In Fede,

Roma, 17 luglio 2000

Acknowledgements

Abstract:

The work published between 1992 - 2000 and presented here forms a continuing meditation on, and exploration of contemporary performance. The term 'contemporary performance' is used to refer to practices and discourses in the performance arts that have occurred over the last decade. There is a particular emphasis on those unstable, hybrid and interdisciplinary areas of performance (including performance art, installation, 'new' dance, 'experimental' theatre, 'live' art) which resist easy definition or categorisation, and which may be further characterised as postmodern in the sense of a reflexive, contextualised and knowingly problematic practice.

More specifically the work builds a sustained thesis on contemporary practice and addresses in a number ways some of the central issues surrounding the placing and practice of performance. It focuses on relationships between performance, textuality, the body, and spatiality; as well as on issues of context, framing and the place of performance in contemporary culture. The work engages with a number key terms applied to contemporary performance including ephemerality, displacement, equivalence and ecology, which contribute to the central thesis that contemporary performance is an unsettled yet always contextualised practice which resists fixities and holds itself between a condition of fragmentation and integration.

Contemporary performance is considered from a number of points of view:
- as performance: where the events and relationships which constitute performance can be documented and mapped;
- as contextualised practice: where the conditions that enable or disable performance can be identified;
- as process : where the dynamics and media of performance can be situated;
- as site : where the frames, surfaces and boundaries of performance can be examined;
- as ecology: where the internal and external interdependencies of performance can be identified;

• as a problematic: where the terms and assumptions that constitute a reading of performance can be identified and analysed.

Two key ideas inform the thesis that emerges from the work: firstly the recognition of an ethical stance towards performance; and secondly the search for a methodology which can disclose the dynamics of performance. The 'acts of writing' are seen as an active as well as reflective methodology - an engagement with the event of performance understood as a located, contextualised practice. The published work presented here sets out some of the underlying conditions and methodologies from which my work in the field of contemporary performance proceeds.

As a thesis it provides sustained evidence of a 'multiple practice' - that is a set of practices and engagements in the field of research that explore what might be termed the 'ecology' of contemporary performance from various positions. This multiple practice is a way of locating the work and of attempting to realise an ethical stance towards performance. The recognition that the conditions of contemporary performance depend on an interdependency of contexts and that performance situates itself as an unstable catalyst that oscillates between these contexts has enabled me to locate my research into contemporary performance in the variety of ways evidenced by the published output collected here.

••••••

Critical Appraisal

Introduction:

The work published between 1992-2000 and presented here as 'Acts of Writing: Writings on Contemporary Performance' forms a continuing meditation about contemporary performance where 'contemporaneity is just as much a topic for meditation as the diverse manifestations of performance in a time after theatre, haunted by the loss of a confident anthropology or a divine ecology' (1) . The term 'contemporary performance' is used to refer to practices and discourses in the performance arts that that have occurred over the last decade. There is a particular emphasis on those unstable, hybrid and interdisciplinary areas of performance (including performance art, installation, 'new' dance, 'experimental' theatre, 'live' art) which resist easy definition or categorisation, and which may be further characterised as 'postmodern' in the sense of a reflexive, contextualised and knowingly problematic practice. (2)

Contemporary performance is viewed as an 'expanded field' in the sense that Rosalind Krauss has used it in relation to sculpture (see Krauss, 1979:) to denote the space of postmodernist practice 'no longer organised around the definition of a given medium on the grounds of material or [...] the perception of material', but rather through the terms that are felt to be 'in opposition within a cultural situation' . The notion of a 'field' of work is also an important underlying concept for my research drawing on for example Olson's proposition of a 'field poetics' (1966:15-26) and Berger's perception of the field 'as an event in itself' (1971: 197) to name two early and abiding influences. Contemporary performance is also understood as an event which confronts the conventional fixities of location and site, its unstable condition allowing it - or compelling it - to migrate between a variety of sites, surfaces and media, from page to body , from body to wilderness.

More specifically the work builds a sustained thesis on contemporary practice and addresses some of the central issues surrounding the placing and practice of performance. It focuses on relationships between performance, textuality, the body, and spatiality; and on issues of

context, framing and the place of performance in contemporary culture. The work represents an aspect of an extensive activity in the field of performance arts, an aspect which is hard to separate from the wider contexts that have informed and generatedit.

Contemporary performance is considered from a number of points of view:

> • as performance: where the events and relationships which constitute performance can be documented and mapped;
>
> • as contextualised practice: where the conditions that enable or disable performance can be identified;
>
> • as process: where the dynamics and media of performance can be situated;
>
> • as site: where the frames, surfaces and boundaries of performance can be examined;
>
> • as ecology: where the internal and external interdependencies of performance can be identified;
>
> • as a problematic: where the terms and assumptions that constitute a reading of performance can be identified and analysed.

The effect of such a range of enquiry is to construct a body of work that is multi-perspectival and which recognises the interdependencies of contemporary performance practice . The thesis as a whole proposes and draws upon a 'multiple practice' - a term which I believe usefully describes the type of multivalent strategies which constitute much contemporary performance work, and which proposes performance as a complex and hybrid form of cultural practice. In the spirit of such a 'multiple practice' a range of complementary modalities of writing are deployed to examine contemporary performance. These modalities are further used to structure the sequence of the thesis (see below) and differentiate between the 'acts of writing' which constitute the work.

Acts of Writing:

These 'acts of writing' take their title and in part their impetus from a short course description

'The Act of Writing in the Context of Post-Modern Man' written in November 1952 by the
American poet Charles Olson:

> The effort is definitely non-literary. [....] The idea is to enable the person to achieve
> the beginning of a disposition toward reality now, by which he or she can bring
> himself or herself to bear as value. [....] The proposition is the simplest: to release
> the person's energy word-wise, and thus begin the hammering of form out of
> content. The engagement of each class, therefore, is the search for a methodology
> by which each person in the class, by acts of writing and critique on others acts of
> writing, may more and more find the kinetics of experience disclosed - the kinetics
> of themselves as persons as well as the stuff they have to work on, and by.
> (Olson,1952:12-13)

The course description (3) encapsulates two key ideas for the thesis: firstly the recognition of an
ethical stance towards performance (Olson's 'disposition toward reality now ...'); and secondly
the search for a methodology which can disclose the dynamics of performance (Olson's 'kinetics
of experience disclosed'). Writing as an active practice - an engagement with the event of
performance as located, contextualised practice - sets out some of the underlying conditions
and methodologies from which my work in the field of contemporary performance proceeds.
There is explicit and implicit reference to Olson's notion of 'open' or 'field' poetics within the
work. My research and practice since the early 1980s has been consistently (if indirectly)
informed by readings of Olson's work. Viewed chronologically, the work presented here moves
across a range of 'acts of writing' and focuses on a number of different aspects of contemporary
performance work. In this appraisal I argue for the coherence and progression of my published
work and its contribution to knowledge in the field of performing arts, by locating the work
itself as a 'multiple practice'; and by identifying the conditions that allow the elements of the
work to cohere within the context of contemporary performance practice.

The work as a thesis provides sustained evidence of 'multiple practice' - a set of practices and
engagements in the field of research that explore what might be termed the 'ecology' of
contemporary performance . This has enabled me to locate my research into performance in a

11

variety of ways: through initiating new contexts for performance work - for example international workshops and conferences such as 'In the Event of Text' (1999) on performance, ephemerality and writing, or 'The Connected Body ?'(1994) on the body and performance; through initiating contexts for publication in particular as co-founding editor of the journal Performance Research which 'aims to promote a dynamic interchange between scholarship and practice in the expanding field of performance' and which emphasises its presence as a site for performance and as a thematically-based site for discourse; through the contexts of teaching and contributing to field of performance studies via workshop, conference and seminar presentations; and through a continuing performance practice both as artist/ writer and as dramaturg. Each of these has contributed to the multiple practice that constitutes the work presented here.

I would also argue that the body of work also represents a continuing and sustained investigation into the problematics of contemporary performance practice by examining a number of key terms within that practice. The terms - for example displacement, ephemerality, equivalence - contribute to the central thesis that contemporary performance is an unsettled yet always contextualised practice which resists fixities and holds itself between a condition of fragmentation and integration. The attempt to establish a stable and coherent set of structures within which contemporary performance can be framed and contextualised demands to be replaced with what I would see as a 'radical coherence' (4) which resists definitions in an old sense and proposes itself as a refusal to stabilise performance into a consistent set of principles or forms. This type of radical coherence - perhaps in a less disturbed sense - appropriately gives form and measure to the acts of writing that constitute my published work as a sustained body of knowledge.

Sequence of Published Works:

In order to clarify the modes of research which have resulted in these collected 'acts of writing', I have departed from the single and progressive chronological presentation of the published works which might conventionally demonstrate a progressive understanding and engagement in

a field of research. Instead I have divided the work into five categories which, taken together as a sustained output since 1992, demonstrate a multiple practice as set out above. The definition of boundaries between different modes of research - (some of which will appropriately be published outcomes, some of which may be thought of as 'performed', 'edited', or 'organised' outcomes) - is not only indicated in Olson's course description, but is a continuing and generative problematic for contemporary arts practice. Questions of undecidability, displacement, slippage, hybridity are a necessary part of the fabric of such practice and there is no reason to suppose that this fragmentation does not permeate and alter the methodologies and approaches that are used to articulate and reflect on contemporary practice. In recognising that much of the work presented here is 'occasional' - in the sense of responding to places, events, requests, editorial contingencies - it becomes necessary to demonstrate a consistent body of work. I hope that the sequence of material demonstrates a way in which a thesis can be formed from a specific set of practices which include editorial, conference, pedagogical, performance, discursive and archival approaches to research.

The following groupings (each of which run chronologically) are therefore not to be read as separate and distinct areas of study and research, but overlap and cross-reference each other. They represent as it were five 'overlays', each mapping and illuminating a different but complementary area of the field of contemporary performance practice.

Section 1: Essays and Papers

This section provides a series of coherent, discursively self-contained essays / papers on aspects of performance in relation to textuality, spatiality, ecology and ephemerality which constitute a consistent line of enquiry and argument and a strong emerging thesis. This first section brings together what may be considered the key pieces of my research work and consists of:

'Creativity has no Frontiers' (1994) - an invited conference paper given at the Strzeminski Anniversary conference in Lodz, Poland and published in INSEA News. It is a polemical meditation on performance and the pedagogy of performance that maps out the directions that

the following work will explore. It identifies a number of conditions that constitute contemporary performance, in particular a dialectic of fragmentation and integration inscribed within the ideas of 'performance image' and ' radical coherence'.

'Textracts' (1996) - an invited conference paper given in Copenhagen for the Word:Theatre - Dialogue conference at Kanonhallen. This paper - published in part in the conference catalogue - opens up the relationship of performance and textuality and brings into play the key research questions of an aesthetics of equivalence, the materiality of writing, the boundaries of what constitutes a text, and the location and 'siting' of performance itself. This paper in an extended form was published as 'Writing - Text - Performance' (1997) in Performance Research Vol.2, No.1 where it forms part of a broader discussion (see Section 3: Editorials below) on performance, textuality and language and explores the ideas of the dynamic of performance as the unstable relationship between text and its performance. This exploration of the notion of 'betweenness' in contemporary performance - the idea of performance as 'unstable catalyst' - is further taken up in an interview with Torill Braaten on 'Dance, Writing & Unsettled Bodies' (1998) for Tidsskrift for Teori og Teater (3t) which resulted from a public seminar for Oktoberdans in Bergen, Norway. The influence of Olson is explicit here with reference to his early work ['ABCs(2)' in Archeologist of Morning, London: Cape Goliard (1970)] and the dynamic of risk and control as a means of thinking contemporary dance practice.

'Performance Writing' (1999) - invited as part of a group of articles edited by the late Alaric Sumner for Performing Arts Journal provides a partial survey of the 'origins' of performance writing, again with reference to Olson's idea of the 'act of writing', the extended discussion of writerly work 'beyond the page', and the performativity of the text in its own terms. 'Ephemera' (1998/2000) was given as a Research Seminar at Dartington College of Arts in response to an invitation from Valentina Valentini to contribute to a conference on 'The Function and Languages of the Critic'. The paper will be published in Biblioteca Teatrale, ed. V. Valentini, Roma: Bulzoni Editore and provides a key work for the thesis both in terms of its methodology, its stylistic approach, its reference to and use of the key terms of the research - ephemerality,

textuality, ecology, spatiality - and its representation of a 'multiple practice'.

'On Immobility' (1999) was prepared for a conference on 'iconoclastic theatre' at Chapter Arts in Cardiff and subsequently published in the journal _Frakcija_ . Using the descriptive methodology of 'Ephemera' it provides a comparative analysis of the work of three contemporary groups working on the borders of performance, in terms of a post-dramaturgy where formerly oppositional terms such as body / environment; presence / representation and centre / periphery now describe a dynamic and fluid field of practice and enquiry. The work manifests in temporary zones of coherence and participates in the unstable and problematic conditions of contemporary culture. This enquiry into the temporary, contingent and unstable practices of contemporary performance is continued in 'The Location and Dislocation of Theatre' (2000) commissioned for the IETM conference in Helsinki and subsequently published in an expanded version in _Performance Research_. Here the research concerns itself with an exploration of the frames and contexts of performance and developing the terms of an ecology of performance which enables a fluid, reflexive and transforming practice.

Section 2: Review Pieces

The modality of my research shifts in this section which brings together a number of occasional pieces including performance and archive reviews. The two short performance reviews 'German Voices' (1992) on the dance work of Eva Schmale published in the first issue of _Hybrid_, and 'Zwillinge: Episode 7' (1994) on the work of the Zwillinge Project adopt a fragmented phenomenological stance which refuses to place the texts, coming on them with unexpectedness and incompleteness. The review - originally (and properly) titled 'A House with Wings?' (1994) published by the Nederlands Theater Institut in _Notes_ addresses among others things the issue of context - educational, architectural and institutional - in relation to contemporary performance and the body. This mode of research into the specific contexts of performance (compare for example the article 'Performance Writing' in Section I) is continued and in some senses formalised in the three Archive Reviews for _Performance Research_ each of which establishes the inseparability of contemporary practice and discourse from issues of documentation and

archiving, and places - in the case of 'Die Schwarze Lade' - the archive centrally as performance event. This section finishes with an extended review / article of a production of ' Tempest(s)' in Copenhagen - published by Reaktion Books in a collection on 'The Tempest and its Travels' (2000) - for which I worked as dramaturg. This provides a recent example of a multiple practice using a range of research methods.to articulate a contemporary practice in terms of displacement, political context and radical textuality.

Section 3: Editorial Pieces

This third section brings together the editorial writings for 'The Connected Body?' (1996) and Performance Research (1996-2000) which in themselves are very dependent on the missing context that they introduce and map. However in another modality of research they map quite precise areas of my research as an editor (5) - a role which in its curatorial aspect at least, is concerned with the identification and enabling of appropriate work under tightly focused themes. My research as co-organiser of 'The Connected Body?' conference held in Amsterdam in August 1994 and as co-founding editor of the journal Performance Research plays a significant part in the multiple practice that I argue for here. In both cases my involvement has been in part motivated by a desire to understand the dynamics of performance through setting up conditions and contexts wherein the processes of performance are enabled. The consideration of site - the location and placing and contexts of performance - is central to my research as it is to the editorial policy of Performance Research. The editorials that are brought together here consist of five pieces, each of which maps a themed field of research the key ideas of which are extended in terms of analytical and critical understanding in the work of the other sections of this thesis. The Introduction to The Connected Body? published as a book in 1996 extends the problematic of the body in performance in the categories used to propose an interdisciplinary approach to the body and performance that structured the conference in 1994. I argue (as elsewhere, for example in 'On Immobility' -see p.88 ff.) that the body in performance participates in a 'double status' of representation and experience, and that this is a unstable and unresolvable status of the body creates an ambivalent site which in defines the dynamic of contemporary practice. The performing body is proposed in four modes: in relation to healing;

in relation to its representation; in relation to its process and in relation to its cultural

construction.

The structured and thematic enquiry into contemporary performance is continued with a

sequence of issues of Performance Research of which I was the initiating or 'lead' editor and for

which I wrote editorials. These were 'On Illusion' (1996) - the status of performance as cultural

practice and as ephemeral 'object' ; 'Letters from Europe' (1997) - performance as conversation, as

text; 'On Line' (1999) - digital and virtual performance; and most recently 'Openings' (2000)

which again inquires into the status of performance as open, fluid and undecidable process. The

enquiry in each of these is paralleled in the work grouped in Section 1.

Section 4: Performance Texts

This fourth section brings together two published performance texts as an important part of the

multiple practice that this thesis reflects. 'Fire Tables XII' - a Text for Machine Assisted Reading

Systems' (1999) was commissioned for the third issue in the Language aLive series published by

Sound & Language. The series 'presents writing by artists [...] whose primary bases might be in

movement, sound, installation, for example, rather than the written word. [....] In each case

they do not tell their whole story'. (Cheek, 1995: 1) This last comment is highly relevant to the

conception of a multiple practice as used here where the active and written research that

constitutes that practice necessarily take on many forms in terms of how their language

materials are processed. In both cases the works included here sit between conventional

categories of either 'performance' or 'writing' . 'Circulate II' (2000) was commissioned by Tomek

Wendland for the Inner Spaces exhibition in Katowice and Posnan in Poland. Both these

performance texts occupy the surface and dimensions of the page as site of performance and are

a part of a two more extensive series of performance installations exploring ephemerality and

process: 'Fire Tables' - a ongoing series since 1997 of performed installations exploring the

instability of the written word. The page work 'Circulate II' shown here is a part of a

series which explores the question of what constitutes 'performance' , where and how 'it' takes

place and who is knowingly (or unknowingly) involved. Ideas of 'remote' performance, the

17

presence/ absence of agency other than those who handle or read the text as object, or who participate in the 'circulation' of the text, are questions which permeates in different ways the whole of this thesis.

Section 5: Pedagogical Documents

This final section provides (in the spirit of an appendix) a broadly pedagogical piece published as a contribution to a volume on artist's process and pedagogy. 'Interiors - Exteriors - Turnarounds' (1996) published in Funkenklänge und Wasserzeichen, a collection of artist's notes and manifestos which reiterate the 'starting positions' for my enquiry into contemporary performance as well as detailing a specific pedagogy for a performance workshop held in Germany in 1996.

Methodology:

The methodologies that inform this thesis respond to the circumstances of the particular publication - the 'where' and 'when' of appropriate research. However, seen overall there is a consistency about the methodology and the style that it evokes within the work. In particular I would point to an ethnographic methodology used more or less throughout, and increasingly in the (chronologically) later discursive work (for example 'Ephemera' or 'On Immobility'). (6) This means of addressing and analysing the performance event is knowingly 'descriptive' - dealing with the problem of what can be said/ written about performance and how what is said/written about performance both participates in and becomes an aspect of the performance. For example, in the final piece of 'ephemera' (in 'The Dislocation and Location of Theatre') which narrates the circumstances of two art 'acts', the capture of the decisive moment - only simulated in the presence and click of the camera - happens in the act of writing.

This descriptive methodology - where I as writer attempt to hold in tension 'simple' observation ('this is what happened') with the knowledge that this 'simplicity' is also problematic and not innocent, and where I attempt to incorporate both positions in one register - also extends to other aspects of the work: the recognition in the practice of contemporary performance of the

problem of being caught in between representation and presence (see for example the discussion of the double-status of the body in 'Ephemera' or the discussion of the act of lifting in 'Creativity has No Frontiers').

This methodology - part ethnographic, part phenomenological (7) - enables me as writer to take responsibility for the growing bodies of knowledge that emerge through the work and that are interwoven and interdependent on each other. These are the growing empirical knowledge of a body of contemporary work; and a body of knowledge on a history of speculation on performance and writing - on certain semiotic behaviours and forms of oscillating ontology caught between representation and presence. These two bodies of knowledge are held together by the consistency and coherence of meditation and the strength of the set of practices that give rise to the publications that constitute the thesis.

In addition the methodology of the work draws on 'field composition' and various forms of paratactic or juxtapositional composition (8) which allow the critical, analytical and descriptive elements of the work to be brought together in relationships which may be described as comprising 'spatialised' rather than linear argument, and which allow for the oscillating and destabilising play of meanings that characterise contemporary performance.

Key Terms:

A number of key terms that are used through the published works as - to borrow from Gregory Bateson's phrase - ' steps to an ecology of performance' . These repeating terms becomes increasingly defined through the research and form the basis of the thesis on contemporary performance that emerges from the work. The key terms begin to form overlapping sets - resisting binary oppositions - becoming unstable terminals across which these investigations of performance arc and splutter. Here I will simply list the range:

- ephemerality / instability / temporariness
- immobility / materiality / site
- ecology / interdependence / equivalence

- dynamics / kinetics / oscillation
- betweenness / migration / catalysis
- displacement/ disturbance / difference
- frame / coherence/ fixity
- presence/ representation / image
- textuality /spatiality / physicality

Significance and Nature of the Work and its Contribution to Knowledge:

To conclude I want to propose that what I have submitted here for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy is evidence of a sustained and continuing engagement with a focused area of research in performance practice. The field of contemporary performance has shifted. The condition of postmodernity, the continuing absorption and interplay between performance, cultural and media environments more than ever calls into question the conventional and familiar terms and strategies that limit and confine performance as a catalyst that unsettles cultural and social attitudes and perceptions. It is clear that a shift from a broadly universalising Aristotelian aesthetic to a distributed, contextualised (and perhaps) post-Cagean aesthetic has long since occurred The old structures and forms however persist (often nowhere more so that in the emerging areas of digital performance) and I would propose that my publications since 1992 have attempted to illuminate and identify a shifted vision of what contemporary performance might be through a concentration on the details of such practice and the acts and modalities of writing which articulate and expand that practice. The notion of equivalence for example does not in my view reduce the contexts and elements of performance to uniformity, but brings with it a necessary recognition that as the dynamic of each of these elements and contexts becomes problematic and self-reflexive, so too does our ability to think and re-think the place and structure of performance as a cultural catalyst. In this dynamic then lies the ethical engagement with performance - the 'disposition toward reality now' that Olson speaks of. The ecology of performance that begins to emerge is predicated on such shifts in the relationship between performance and site, performance and body, performance and text which my research has engaged with. The 'act of writing' participates in the perception and dynamic of performance.

As with the journal <u>Performance Research</u> where the focus of my work (and that of my co-founding editors) has in part been concerned to create contexts where contemporary practice in its most expanded sense can 'take place', so my published work contributes to the field of contemporary performance in a number of ways: through 'acts of writing' - how particular forms of writing on contemporary performance open the possibilities for rethinking what performance is; through bringing together disparate and marginal aspects of contemporary performance in a field of research and exploration.

Charles Olson's fundamental axiom that 'art does not seek to describe but to enact' (Olson, 1966: 61) (despite its universalising tone) underpins the sense in my work that the 'enactment' takes places at all levels of the work - that each element is necessary, equivalent and dynamic. In so far as my thesis contributes to knowledge on contemporary performance, it maps the usage of some terms that I hope have and will enable an articulation and revisioning of performance practice; and it also makes some propositions for a set of practices with which to explore rather an interpret the contexts and structures of contemporary performance. Olson's project in the contexts that he was writing in was 'to take up the fragmented world and find its living connections'. Perhaps such 'living connections' in our own time consist only in the ethical tracing of the ephemeral objects of performance , the setting up of temporary zones of coherence, of temporary shelters where 'acts of writing' and 'acts of performance' can hold between fragmentation and integration.

++++++

Notes:

1 From John Hall's unpublished comments (April 2000) - on reading the published work included here.

2 See for example Nick Kaye's discussion of the term in relation to performance in Kaye, 1994:1-4.

3 See also 'Performance Writing' (1999) in Section 1, p.62 below.

4 See for example Don Wellman's poetic elaboration of this term: 'Who was it that determined that the garden should stop at the roadside? The jewel-weed and the figwort growing in the dusty gravel, the telephone poles bleeding creosote, and the conversations passing along those wires constitute a radical coherence.' (Wellman in O.ARS/1, 1981:10)

5 'What are the virtues of an editor? Tact (an ability to cheat?) sincerity (an ability to lie?) and compromise (the ability to accept victory as defeat) would seem essential.' (Bill Griffiths, 1999: unpublished correspondence)

6 This refers to a tentative style of post-Geertzian ethnography which incorporates the knowledges, assumptions and contexts of the ethnographer into the writing of the event. See for example James Clifford & George. E Marcus (eds) (1986) Writing Culture: the Poetics and Politics of Ethnography, Berkeley: U.California Press.

7 Drawing in particular on Merleau-Ponty (1981) and Stanton. B. Garner (1994) with their phenomenological approach which examines the world as it is perceived and inhabited, and emphasises an embodied subjectivity as distinct from an abstracting objectification of the world - approaches which have played a significant role in the analysis of performance practice. The question of how the embodied subject 'comes to know and interact with a world of which [he/ she] is always, inescapably and ambiguously, a part' (Garner, 1994:3) links closely with the methodologies which I am using in these 'acts of writing'.

8 See for example Olson (1950); (Cage (1968); Gefin (1982); Ulmer (1987); Landow (1997).

References:

Berger, John (1980) 'Field' (1971) In About Looking, London: Readers and Writers pp.192-198

cheek, cris (ed.) (1995) Language aLive: 1 Lowestoft: Sound & Language

Garner, Stanton B. (1994) Bodied Spaces: Phenomenology & Performance in Contemporary

        Drama, Ithaca: Cornell UP

Géfin, Laszlo K. (1982) Ideogram Milton Keynes: Open University Press

Kaye, Nick (1994) Postmodernism and Performance London: Macmillan

Krauss, Rosalind (1979) 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field' In October 8 (Spring)

Landow, George P. (1997) Hypertext 2.0: The convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory &

        Technology Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (1981) Phenomenology of Perception London: Routledge & Kegan Paul

Olson, Charles (1966) 'Projective Verse' (1950) in Selected Writings, ed. Robert Creeley,

        New York: New Directions

Olson, Charles (1966) 'Human Universe' (1951) in Selected Writings, ed. Robert Creeley,

        New York: New Directions

Olson, Charles (1952) 'The Act of Writing in the context of Post-Modern Man' In Black Mountain

        College Bulletin, Vol.10, No.4

Ulmer, Gregory L. (1985) Applied Grammatology Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP

Wellman, Don (ed.) (1981) O.ARS /1: Coherence Cambridge, Mass.: O.ARS

◆◆◆◆◆◆◆ ˙

Bibliography:

The following provides a collated listing of references from the published works 1992- 2000.

Allsopp, Ric (1999) 'On Immobility' in Disturbing (the) Image, Frakcija, No. 15, Zagreb: CDU

Allsopp, Ric (et al.) (1997) 'On Refuge' Performance Research Vol.2, No.3 London: Routledge

Allsopp, Ric (ed.) (1996) 'On Illusion' Performance Research Vol.1, No.3

Allsopp, R. & deLahunta, S. (eds) (1996) The Connected Body? Amsterdam: AHK

Arntzen, Knut-Ove (1990) 'A Visual Kind of Dramaturgy ...' in Small is Beautiful, (ed.)

        C. Schumacher, Glasgow: TSP.

Artaud, Antonin (1970) The Theatre and Its Double, London: Calder & Boyars

Barba, Eugenio (1979) 'Theatre Culture' in The Floating Islands, Holstebro: Odin Teatret,

Baudrillard, Jean (1994) 'Transaesthetics' in The Transparency of Evil London: Verso

Becker, Howard S. (1982) Art Worlds Berkeley: U.California Press

Bergvall, Caroline (1996) 'Eclat - Occupations des Lieux 1-10' in Performance Research Vol.1, No.3 (Winter)

Blau, Herbert (1992) To All Appearances, PAJ - Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore

Boyle, James (1997) Shamans, Software & Spleens: Law & the Construction of the Information Society,

        Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP

Carlson, Marvin (1997) Performance: a critical introduction London: Routledge

Celaint, Germano (1996) Juan Cabrita Reis Amsterdam: De Appel Foundation.

Derrida, Jacques (1967: 1978) Writing and Difference London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Dreyblatt, Arnold (1997) 'The Memory Arena' in Performance Research 'On Refuge' Vol.2, No.3 (Autumn)

Eagleton, Terry (1986) William Shakespeare Oxford: Blackwell

Erickson, Jon (1995) The Fate of the Object Ann Arbor: Michigan UP.

Fuchs, Elinor (1990) 'Presence and the Revenge of Writing' in Performing Arts Journal

George, David (1996) 'Performance Epistemology' in Performance Research Vol.1, No.1 (Spring)

Goulish, Matthew (1997) 'Five Microlectures' in Performance Research, Vol.1, no.3 'On Illusion'

Issacharoff, Michael & Jones, Robin (eds) (1998) Performance Texts, Pennsylvania UP,

Jager, Edgar (1997) 'Ambient Theatre/@Temporary/ for the nineties' in Datum Amsterdam: NTI

Jones, Amelia (1998) Body Art: Performing the Subject , Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

Jonkers, Thera (1998) 'Interview with Jason Bowman' (unpublished) Antwerpen: DeBeweeging

van Kerkhoeven, Marianne (1992) 'Beyond Indifference' In Theaterschrift, No.1

Lind, Maria (1998) 'Stopping my Process' in Stopping the Process? Helsinki: NIFCA

Marranca, Bonnie (1996) Ecologies of Theatre Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP.

Mignot, Dorine (ed.) (1994) Gary Hill, Amsterdam: Stedlijk Museum

Mosquera, Gerardo (1995) 'On Art, Politics and the Millennium in Latin America' in Strategies Stockholm: SACA

Olson, Charles (1950) 'Projective Verse' in Selected Writings ed. R.Creeley (New Directions, 1966)

Olson, Charles (1952) 'The Act of Writing in the Context of Post-Modern Man' in Olson: The Journal of the Charles
        Olson Archives, ed. George Butterick (Connecticut UP) No.2 Autumn 1974, p.28.

Petersen, Anna Ring (1997) ' The Authority of Invisible Power' in siksi Copenhagen:

Phelan, Peggy (1993) Unmarked: The Politics of Performance London: Routledge

Plesniarowicz, Krzysztof (1994) The Dead Memory Machine , trans. William Brand, Cricoteka: Krakow

Porter, Roy (1991) 'The History of the Body' in New Perspectives on Historical Writing ed. Peter Burke,
        Cambridge: Polity Press

Rogoff, Irit (1998) 'How to Dress for an Exhibition' in Stopping the Process? Helsinki: NIFCA

Sayre, Henry M. (19..) The Object of Performance Chicago: Chicago UP

Serra, Richard (1992) 'The Yale Lecture' (1990) in Art in Theory eds C.Harrision & P.Woods, Oxford: Blackwell

Schama, Simon (1996) Landscape and Memory London: Fontana

Semin, Didier (et al.) (1995) Christian Boltanski London: Phaidon

Seymour, Anna (1991) Richard Long: Walking in Circles London:

Vassiliev, Anatoly (1992) 'Theatre as Monastic Community' in Theaterschrift No.2 Brussels: Kaaitheater

Valentini, Valentina (1998) 'The Post-Dramaturgy of Heiner Müller', unpublished article

Valentini, Valentini (1997) 'The Oresteia of the Societas Raffaello Sanzio' in Performance Research,
        Vol.2, no.3, 'On Refuge'

Walsh, Jeremy (1997) 'The Media-(ted) Landscape: Image becoming Context' in kitsch, no.14,'Screens'.

Williams, Raymond (1991) 'Drama in a Dramatized Society' (1977) in Drama in Performance Milton
        Keynes: Open University Press

Williamson, Aaron (1997) 'Shaved Pages- (Tabula Rasa)' in Performance Research 'On Refuge' Vol.2,
        No.3 (Autumn) pp.56-57

++++++

Section 1

Essays and Papers

(1994)

'Creativity Has No Frontiers'

INSEA News , No.1 ed. Wieslaw Karolak

Lodz: INSEA, pp.6-11

'City Tree' - photo © Flo Fox, 1983 (detail)

Creativity Has No Frontiers

Ric Allsopp

1.   The lines that form this image (City Tree - Flo Fox, 1983) participate in a number of possible relationships and readings between ideas of fragmentation and of integration: for instance the lines may be read as forces that help to bring about the fragmentation of oppressive, hierarchical control - breaking up deadening structures, transgressing formal boundaries that limit creativity - the image could be an icon for the recent social and political revolutions in Eastern Europe brought about partially by the oppositional work of artists and theatre performers; at the same time the lines can be read as a means of healing and integration - forces that provide 'living connections' between the rubble of the fragmented world - for example the recent materialisation of cultural events in Sarajevo that see the cultural necessity of 'magical operations' alongside rational aid, in a context where aesthetic actions might be thought to be of marginal use.

What concerns me here is not so much what this City Tree image means - since it will participate in many meanings depending on context - but rather, how to make images that speak for our own time,and cultural and social circumstances. Wladyslaw Strzeminski's utopian idealism - that 'the aim of art is unity of composition' , the 'pattern that connects' as Gregory Bateson puts it - is hard to imagine as we find ourselves shifting from Aristotelian to Cagean aesthetics in a context where political, social, economic or religious certainties are no longer with us.

2.   It is fragmentation that best characterises the post-modern, post-industrial condition that we live in. A fragmentation that ruptures the traditional fabric of the aesthetic sphere as much as it is evident in wider social, political, economic and cultural realms. The shattering of boundaries, political frontiers, cultural certainties; the breaking of the pictorial frame, the

traditional site of the art object; the theatricality and dramatisation of everyday life especially in

the consumer cultures of the West; problems of cultural identity, nationalism, the identity of

the self, subjectivity - all these signs and symptoms point to a condition of late 20th century life

that is becoming normative. To make sense of this - if it is still possible to think in such terms -

we have to seek new forms of radical coherence that no longer turn to exemplary historical and

cultural models of the past two thousand years - the 'junk of history' that has failed us - for a

new sense of direction and integration.

In the last twenty five years many forms of visual art have turned towards the processes of

theatre and performance as a means of radically reconceiving the self-contained or 'unitary' art

object. Since the 1960's the increasing effacement of the art object and its gradual

disappearance has left only traces, stains and fissures in what seemed to be a coherent social,

cultural and aesthetic fabric.

Museums and galleries, traditional sites of the art world, increasingly bring our attention to the

structures and contexts of the edifice that houses art itself, rather than to the objects displayed

within - corners filled with fat, floors covered in rice, walls covered in hand-prints or broken

through, doors boarded up, windows mirrored. As fast as the art object de-materialises and

disappears from one familiar site so it seems to reappear again in other newer cracks and lesions

in the cultural fabric - infinitely adaptable and resourceful.

I am pointing to a dialectic here - a continuous tension between fragmentation and integration,

a tendency for the art work to fluctuate between the autonomous and the social, a tension that

provides the possibility of a 'new authenticity' that embraces notions of integrated as well as

fragmentary experience.

3.   This tension was pointed to by the poet Charles Olson - the first self-consciously post-

modern American poet - when he wrote in the 1950's that our task in attempting to create a

'human universe' - a place where we can dwell in sympathetic and constructive relation to the

range of cultural, environmental and affective processes that determine us - is "to take up the

fragmented world, and find its living connections" and this provides a key reference point for this paper.

What did Charles Olson mean? He certainly had no interest in trying to stick things back together according to rationalist historical or aesthetic principles which had, from his 1950's perspective, so obviously failed to provide a 'human universe'. His post-modern outlook pushed him to find a radical coherence where the art object (whether literary, visual, performative or musical) is both a social object - a complex relationship of fragmentary materials that involve us in the world - and performs at the same time an projective, integrative and critical function.

The 'City Tree', though coming from a different context and time, provides me with a visualisation of Olson's imperative and, as a representation of 'tree', might have provided Wladyslaw Strzeminski with a demonstration of what art is not, since the processes that give form to trees (cell division, environmental factors) for him had no place in art. What would he have made of the music of John Cage, the dances of Merce Cunningham or Deborah Hay? The form of art and the art image itself - which term I will return to - is never separated from other processes of life as Strzeminski seems to have suggested.

Whilst I believe that an image has life of its own, formed by varied processes, this 'life', if we can call it that, can never be entirely autonomous. any more than individuals can be separated from their cultural context. The rationalist project has in many ways caused a separation from our environment, including our attitudes to our bodies - the division between body and mind, between the cognitive and the sensorial. It has marginalised the magical, the collective and the poetic in favour of the rational, the individual and the prosaic.

The biblical narrative of 'golden calf' which concerns the 'worship of graven images' can be read as a metaphor for the rationalist arrogance that imagines we can create things that are not influenced by other processes - that are seen as autonomous, self-contained. This is a frontier that creativity might pause at, where we might ask the question of 'creativity in service of what?' Is 'creativity' free of contexts? It seems to me 'creativity' can serve materialism and destruction,

28

or mutual exchange and integration in equal parts and that this is a responsibility we have to accept.

But this might already be seen as old thinking, old forms, old metaphors - creativity can no longer defined by its end, by product; creativity is not a category, a finite process defined by its end, determinate and unified. The creative process, is simply that: a process - not purposeful or causal in an Aristotelian sense - but playful, contradictory, uncertain, transformative, generative - the 'golden calf' become an alchemical process.

4.   The line that provides the opposition (in Strzeminski's constructivist thinking) between direction and dimension, and which he sought to renounce - along with rhythm - because of its divisive properties, in favour of 'unism' has becomes in the post-modern aesthetic the space of enquiry, the locus of investigation, the site where what I will call 'performance image' leaves it trace, its presence. The line (metaphorically seen as a crack or fissure or tear in the cultural/ aesthetic fabric) becomes the site of an exploration of the ephemeral and disruptive aspects of the art event, the site of the reappearance of a radically shifted art object, a signifier of difference. The line is no longer seen a simply divisive or as a formal boundary, an object in which properties reside. It is seen as an uncertain and transforming set of relationships that find sense and function on the basis of what one can do with it , how one can actively collaborate with it, rather than passively observe it.

5.   Last April, prompted by a moment in a dance work performed by students in Amsterdam, I tried to write down what for me were the conditions of the art work - what it was that provided me with the motivation to keep teaching and making performance, what kept me interested in this field of aesthetics. The moment in the dance that provoked me was a moment of flight - a man jumping into the arms of another, capturing energy in the same way as the French photographer Lartigue had done in his studies of bodies in flight. Nothing unusual in this movement except the particular image that remained with me - the freedom and trust with which his body moved through the air and was caught. The writing became an attempt to re-think the art object as 'performance image' - an object no longer autonomous and contained but

an event essentially ephemeral, live and crossing boundaries of visual art, music, theatre, dance. The text I call 'In a Moment of Flight' and it consists of a number of polemical statements concerning 'performance image' - itself a problematic formulation, but something that I take to be the fire at the centre, the energy of aesthetic experience.

In a Moment of Flight

What is it that performance gives life to? What is it in performance that remains in memory? What are the residues, stains, traces that linger and provoke us? These fluid images, which we desire, which we avidly seek, which constantly surprise us - occurring in the collective present, taking place in the immediacy of performance - remain the most transitory of ghosts.

Performance image has its own life - like fire

Performance image is only 'known' through participation in the collective space that enables it to take form

Performance image breaks with the objective, perspectival space of modernity, the space of extension, the observational space of humanism

Performance image flows around the body of performance, (performer/ spectator/ site) encountering resistance, slowing down, speeding up, looping back in on itself, multi-perspectival

Performance image takes place in relationships, moving along pathways that include the physical, cognitive and affective processes of performer and spectator

Performance image forms itself as a virtual/ imaginal world that breaks through the surfaces of the sensory/ perceptual world at many points

Performance image resists/ transforms the subjective, generates something beyond itself, making connections outside itself

Performance image emphasises the generative and transformative over the imitative and representational

Performance image is exchanged as gift, not as commodity

30

> Performance image exists in an act of trust,
>
> > a leap into open space,
> >
> > > a moment of flight,
> > >
> > > > the flash of a firework against a darkening sky.

I would hope that these statements are provocative as well as marking a position that I hold. I would like to draw out one of them.

'Performance image has its own life - like fire'. Here the idea is - at least from a compositional point of view - that at a certain point in the process of making work, the work - the 'performance image' that is coming into being - takes on its own life. It is at this point that the material underhand becomes generative and transformational, that the 'living connections' take shape. The performance image begins to take on its own meanings, have is own dimension that is not separated from the process that created it, but a extension of it. In this way the artist does not relinquish responsibility, but recognises that the 'art work' is participating in meanings that are not and cannot be completely determined by the artist. This life is not a completion, a closure, but a constant process of moving towards form that recognises the uncertain relationship between the rational and the emotional. This 'life' of the image is in a sense the result of a magical operation - that is the parts of any process that resist the rational, that go beyond what we can know, that can provide insight, that break through the boundaries of technique or skill, that allow imaginal/ physical actions to be effective but not necessarily logical, that can begin to realise the 'unseen', the 'unspoken' that is constantly hovers around the margins of our experience.

6.   Performance image, like creativity, tends to resist and perhaps should resist definitions. In that sense its frontiers are constantly mutable and transforming. I feel committed an idea of creativity in so far as I try to enable people to work with:

- the details of what is there, the material to hand, rather than with abstractions, with already formed images

- the 'action' of doing something in performance circumstances rather than 'acting'

- the traces and images that such action generates

- attention to physical presence, to object and to site

- the possibility of 'magical operations' - that imaginal/ physical actions can be effective but not necessarily logical or rational and that can begin to realise the 'unseen', the 'unspoken'

- compositional strategies that allows material to move towards form rather than be determined by structure

- an attention, a movement that goes from idea to action/ from body to image

- the possibility of using creative means to re-enchant/ re-claim the alienated realities that surround us.

What is important is trying to make something together, a 'something' that in this instance might be called performance - that involves the creative efforts of a group of people in a particular time and place - that invokes something that cannot be totally predicted in advance - that in some sense or other is given its own life, a 'life' that provides an imaginative and regenerative energy for people involved (as spectators / participants or performers); a 'life' that is not divorced from larger cultural, social, political, or environmental realities.

These processes are centrally concerned with the experience of the moment, in what is happening as people come together physically, imaginatively, socially, as individuals or as groups, to do something, to make performance images together. This experience always resists description in the sense that much of its activity is happening as a live event, the thing itself, rather than a reflection about, a description of, the thing. For example, asking a person to lift another person from the floor is an instruction that is easily grasped in the mind. As an action that engages you in the present problem of how it is done, or indeed what it might begin to mean for someone watching, it is something that requires a different set of 'understandings' to

realise the instruction. It is this different set of 'understandings' - this shift in attention, an ability to engage with what is in front of us, that is important.

The insistence on an attention to the 'dimension of the present moment' (as Miroslav Holub calls it) - at least as an approach to making performance - finds an expression in the way that materials as well as 'time' are used. This is not a reductivist approach to 'things as they are', or a belief in some 'absolute' nature or quality, but rather a recognition that 'things as they are' (simple actions - walking, sitting, standing; materials - salt, metal, fire) are already complex enough without the imposition or overlay of additional meanings.

Octavio Paz, with reference to the work of Duchamp, describes the art work as a 'machine for producing meanings'. In trying to strip away assumptions, expectations, conditioned responses in order to arrive at the material itself, we hope to arrive at where the work begins; letting things speak for themselves, find their own life, and engage in the inherent emptying and filling of meaning.

Such processes can only bring performance material to a point of contact - things are put in relationship, images are starting to occur, to deepen, but the broader sense of (radical) coherence or 'living connections' is only hinted at. Thus any 'performance' will be pitched at this point of first recognition of material - essaying: trying things out to see how they/ if they fit. The 'life' that begins to inhabit the reality that is formed between the intention of the performance maker(s) and the perception of the spectator(s) - what Marcel Duchamp refers to as the 'difference' that is the work itself - makes its first meanings here.

Support for art work as a form of gift-giving, of imaginative exchange (particularly in 'live' media) is particularly important in a cultural atmosphere dominated by consumerism and materialist values. Art work provides us with a means of re-imagining and re-forming our individual and collective futures that can be freed from conventional expectations and values. Victor Schklovsky put it as follows:

Art exists to help us to recover the sensation of life, to make the

stone stony. The end of art is to give a sensation of the object as seen,

not as recognised. The technique of art is to make things 'unfamiliar',

to make forms obscure, so as to increase the difficulty and the

duration of perception. The act of perception in art is an end in itself

and must be prolonged. In art, it is our experience of the process of

construction that counts, not the finished product.

The product is never in a sense 'finished' but constantly involved in a shifting reception of its

meanings in a given context - if this is the case then we as artists are impelled towards

engagement with processes that embrace both our affective, emotional, and physical selves and

our rational, structuring inclinations.

7.   A final thought might be taken from working in and with landscape - here we are

confronted with no beginnings, no endings, a place that can be entered at any point, dissolving

borders. The process of working in landscape thus challenges the notion of the frame and the

viewers ability to contain it, announcing its own incompletion and forcing the frame to become

a 'frame of mind'. As another American poet William Carlos Williams suspected, in this context

which is both metaphorical and actual, the local becomes the only universal - we begin to give

life to that which is in front of us.

•••••••

(1996)

'Textracts'

Word:Theatre -Dialogue, catalogue ,

Copenhagen: Kanonhallen, pp.10-11

Textracts

Ric Allsopp

- The illusionary nature of theatre - its ability to conjure presence and the appearance of 'spontaneous speech' - is in part due to the perceived role of the dramatic text within it. Traditionally theatre has been seen as the performance of a preexisting text ; as being 'shadowed' by a prior text that, whilst open to a range of permissible readings and interpretations*, maintains its own coherence as a written text outside the ephemeral moment of its performance. The constancy of the text and the constancy of identity of the audience that interprets it are two central assumptions on which the performance of occidental theatre is based.

[*A 'literal' performance of the text 'Woyzeck' for example , that is letter-by-letter , would not be a permissible dramatic interpretation, though it is a possible (though unrecommended) performance reading

- The tensions between the writerly and the theatrical or performative consciousness that are contained within the text continue to be the primary site where the redefinitions of theatre and performance are played out. In 'The Theatre and Its Double' (1936) Antonin Artaud (still) calls for 'an end to the subjugation of the theatre to the text' and the recovery of 'a kind of unique language half-way between gesture and thought'. The dreamlike reification of the word that Artaud imagined has inscribed itself in much post-war theatre work (for example Richard Foreman or Robert Wilson] where the word as object takes its place as an equivalent to the other elements that constitute the performance. Writing more recently on Derrida's theories of 'presence' in relation to theatre, Elinor Fuchs has indicated that 'writing itself, which has traditionally retired behind the apparent presence of performance, is openly declaring itself the environment in which dramatic structure is situated', and one might add 'where the performative is located'.

•   The constantly oscillating relation of text to performance - the feedback between form

and the dramaturgical or compositional strategies that informs much contemporary arts

practice - points towards a dramaturgy of interactive texts which must be predicated on fluidity

and adaptability rather than constancy and conformity.

•   The work of Gary Hill, Robert Frank, Marina Abramovic, Paul Sermon, Ilya Kabakov (*) (a

widely differing group of artists) cannot be placed under the category of theatre, but is (in part

at least) concerned with the conditions of performance and the possibilities (spatial/ temporal/

emotional) that a performative and interactive framework gives to the physical, textual and

plastic material that they are working with. There would seem to be a common aspect in the

work of these artists which arises from the various ways in which text is placed in relation to the

grain of the work. This might be identified as a conscious absence (an eloquent void) that is

delineated by text, or by silence. This points firstly towards a kind of text-performance

relationship that is qualitatively different from that relationship of text andperformance that is

found in theatre where such silences and absences tend to be filled by, rather than voided by

text; and secondly to an interactive 'text' that is not predicated on the transcription of speech or

the illusion of 'spontaneous speech' but on the ability of each spectator to interact with, and

therefore change and be changed by, a mute text of sufficient eloquence and familiarity to hold

the interaction in tension.

[* Gary Hill 'Tall Ships'; Robert Frank 'Moving Pictures'; Marina Abramovic 'Night Sea

Crossing'; Paul Sermon 'Telematic Dreaming'; Ilya Kabakov 'The Reading Room']

•   For instance the silence that permeates the installation 'Tall Ships'(1994) (in contrast to

many other of Gary Hill's installations which include sonic and/or graphic explorations of text)

renders eloquent the individual interactions between spectator and the ghostly projections that

fill the long darkened corridor which frames the experience. It is an essentially theatrical

experience in so far that it conjures apparent presence from absence. The text as such is

nowhere revealed - the installation is an intense individual experience which whilst using some of

the spatial conventions of theatre does not allow for a collective reading of the images but an

individual one. The spectator is drawn into an individual network of intertextuality: drawing on the history of similar interactions with familiar people as a series of behavioural texts; drawing on the virtual dialogues which seem to take place with each of the sixteen people that inhabit the corridor.

• In the Introduction to his 1980 anthology of performance texts, 'Scenarios: Scripts to Perform' (1980) a title which reflects the transitional and impermanent status of its contents - Richard Kostelanetz assumes that 'innovations in theatrical art in part depend upon scripting so radically alternative it insures that a performance cannot be realised in conventional ways', and its converse that ' conventional texts are conducive to conventional performance'. It is not however just the form (or lack of form) of the text which facilitates a transition from theatre to performance, but an increasing rereading of the assumptions that underlie the notionsof what constitutes a text, what are its material treatments are , what writing is, and where and how it takes place.

•••••••

References:

Ric Allsopp (ed.)(1996) 'On Illusion' Performance Research Vol.1, No.3

Antonin Artaud (1936: 1979) The Theatre and Its Double (London: Calder & Boyars)

Jon Erickson (1995) The Fate of the Object (Ann Arbor: Michigan UP)

Elinor Fuchs (1990) 'Presence and the Revenge of Writing' in PAJ, 26/27: 163-173

David George (1996) 'Performance Epistemology' in Performance Research Vol.1, No.1 (Spring)

•••••••

(1997)

'Writing - Text - Performance'

Writing - Text - Performance

Ric Allsopp

In the Introduction to his 1980 anthology of performance texts, <u>Scenarios: Scripts to Perform</u>, a title which reflects the transitional and impermanent status of its contents - Richard Kostelanetz writes that 'innovations in theatrical art in part depend upon scripting so radically alternative it insures that a performance cannot be realised in conventional ways', and its converse that ' conventional texts are conducive to conventional performance'. It is not however just the form (or lack of form) of the text which facilitates a transition from writing to performance, but an increasing rereading of the assumptions that underlie the notionsof what constitutes a text, what its material treatments are , what writing is, and where and how it takes place. I want to write here about the act of writing in its relationship to text and to performance with reference to two examples of contemporary practice which arguably lie at the extreme limits of writing in regard to theatre or at least theatrical space: Gary Hill's interactive video installation <u>Tall Ships</u> (1992) and Caroline Bergvall's performed text installation <u>Eclat</u> (1996) - a version of which was published in the last issue of <u>Performance Research</u> ' On Illusion' (Winter 1996).

As Bonnie Marranca has noted in her recent book <u>Ecologies of Theatre</u> (1996:36) the Pulitzer Prize board chose not to confer a prize for Robert Wilson's <u>the CIVIL warS</u> because no conventional text existed for the work. This was 1986. How much has changed in the relationship between writing, text and performance in the last decade? Is the debate about the theatre text over sixty years after Artaud's first manifesto for <u>The Theatre of Cruelty</u> - to name but one point of fracture - still based on an idea of writing as something that is primarily located on the page? Certainly contemporary practice in various arts disciplines would suggest that the idea of writing (and the analytical and dramaturgical discourses that surround it) has loosened its ties to the page. I am thinking not only here of Robert Wilson and others of his generation, but also of the range of performance work, installation work, electronic and live art work which

has begun to open up the materiality of writing and to influence and reshape ways in which contemporary theatre writing can be thought.

The illusionary nature of theatre - its ability to conjure presence and the appearance of 'spontaneous speech' - is in part due to the perceived role of the dramatic text within it. Traditionally theatre has been seen as the performance of a preexisting text ; as being 'shadowed' by a prior text that, whilst open to a range of permissible readings and interpretations *, maintains its own coherence as a written text outside the ephemeral moment of its performance. The constancy of the text and the homogeneity of the audience that interprets it are two central assumptions on which the tradition and performance of western theatre is based.

The tensions between the writerly and the theatrical or performative consciousness that are contained within the text continue to be the primary site where the redefinitions of theatre and performance are played out. In the First Manifesto, Antonin Artaud called for 'an end to the subjugation of the theatre to the text' and the recovery of 'a kind of unique language half-way between gesture and thought' (1970: 68). The dreamlike reification of the word that Artaud imagined has inscribed itself in much post-war theatre work (for example Richard Foreman or Robert Wilson] where the word as object takes its place as an equivalent to the other elements that constitute the performance. Writing more recently on Derrida's theories of 'presence' in relation to theatre, Elinor Fuchs has indicated that 'writing itself, which has traditionally retired behind the apparent presence of performance, is openly declaring itself the environment in which dramatic structure is situated', and one might add 'where the performative is located' (1990: 163).

What happens to 'writing' as we move from modernist practice based on ideas of unity, disciplinarity and authenticity? What happens to 'writing' as we move towards postmodernist readings that identify the artwork as part of a contextual ground that is multi-valent, participatory and interdisciplinary? What is the role of the text when performance tends towards transformational rather than mimetic or reactualising art? The present situation is intensified by

the impact of media and digital technologies and more importantly the shifts in value that are the effect of cultural, political and aesthetic change. The question of the place of 'writing' is now more pressing than ever. Theatre in its conventional sense and practice [as perpetuating the illusions of spontaneous speech and of spontaneous action] will of course remain a central part of the spectrum of arts practice, but questions of new direction and strategy must be concerned with the placing and relationship of writing to the elements that constitute theatre.

Performance as a frame for understanding certain types of arts practice, traditionally theatre and dance, is now increasingly applied to categories of practice that include forms video installation work, sculpture, poetry and other forms of time-based arts. How is writing placed within this ever widening field of performance? The historical classifications of the arts are proving all the time less appropriate as a means for the formal reading and critical placing of the kind of language work which is being produced. Some concerted excavation of textual work is called for. As long as the boundaries between performance art forms continue to be shored up by their specific histories as disciplines, there needs to be an effort to relocate writing both on and beyond the page, as a dynamic fabric or texture of sonic, graphic, physical and material writings. These writings can give rise to representations both abstract, and realist, both ambiguous and lucid; to texts that 'hold' in tension these many aspects of contemporary performance; and to a dramaturgy that animates and elucidates the dynamic connections between these equivalent elements .

Performance writing - as this view of the relationship between performance and writing might now be called - can only locate itself as part of the atomisation of literature, theatre, music and so on. Performance writing highlights the dynamic tensions that arise from the pooling of different writing practices - especially the materiality of writing beyond the page and forms of digital writing that are enabled by new technologies. Is it writings role in new theatre still to function as a guiding background, as the blueprint of a live piece - where the text is absorbed · and subsumed by live performance? What if writing forces a disjunction between performing a 'hidden text' and performing writing? Can writing be an equivalent element informing and informed by site, context, space, body, time, object?

42

Two ideas are central here. Firstly the materiality of writing as trace rather than a transcription of speech, as an inscription rather than as description, a writing about something. The materiality of writing concerns writing as it performs itself as graphic, sonic or physical presence. This is an area that has not been not well considered in the readings of either dramatic or performance texts. The 'visible and plastic materialisation of speech' or the manipulation of speech as 'solid object which overturns and disturbs things' that Artaud suggests is paralleled by the manipulation and materialisation of writing itself as 'solid object' - the inclusion of both the act and the trace of writing in theatre, not simply as a descriptive element - talking about writing, writing about talking - but as a structural and equivalent element.

Secondly, an aesthetics of equivalence: an aesthetics which gives equivalent status to all the elements that may constitute performance.Both John Cage and Aristotle base their aesthetics on the assumption that art should imitate the processes of the natural world. Their views of how the processes are constituted are however diametrically opposed. For Aristotle the causal processes of nature accord to a universalising unified hierarchical system; for Cage they establish a field of equivalence that is characterised by unimpededness and interpenetration *.The contemporary idea of equivalence then finds it's roots in the aesthetics of John Cage, and implies both the materiality of the elements that constitute a given performance as well as their overall equivalence within a value system. Thus for example 'writing' which (at least with in 'classical' theatre aesthetics) has remained prior to the text , a 'hidden' activity subsumed within the dramatic text which is itself subsumed within the theatre performance, is given equal status as an element in the overall construction of the art work/ performance to other elements which have traditionally been prioritised. This idea of equivalence (which has been elsewhere articulated by Knut-Ove Artzen *) does not imply a flattening out of material or a necessary drift into relativism, but I believe, opens up the possibilities of the radically different forms of theatre that can be seen in the work of say Kantor, Richard Foreman, Robert Wilson, Forced Entertainment, Bak-truppen and the work of many more marginal and ephemeral performance makers and artists.

It is perhaps no more than a coincidence that the invention of video - the magnetically captured image - happened to coincide with Derrida's re-reading of Artaud's Theatre and its Double in which Artaud incidentally speaks of a 'magnetic intercommunication'. Derrida provides a theoretical ground where writing rather than speech is prioritised and from where a new theatre, a theatre of images, of equivalent elements can be read; a theatre in which we can see the relationships between writing, text and performance that have characterised aspects of experimental theatre since the 1960s.

The 'new sense' of writing that Artaud proposes is a theatrical writing that 'will no longer occupy the limited position of simply being the notation of words, but will cover the entire range of this new language: not only phonetic writing and the transcription of speech, but also hieroglyphic writing, the writing in which phonetic elements are coordinated to visual, pictorial, and plastic elements' (Derrida 1978: 240).

The theatre text is conventionally treated as if spoken. The sense of presence that is carried in the spoken word is the communicative presence that theatre attempts to realise through closing the gaps between form and meaning. The presence of writing disrupts this gap, again forcing a disjunction between performing a 'hidden text' and performing itself as writing. For this reason the Greek philosopher Plato condemned writing because the written word was cut loose from the communicative presence of speech. But this distance - the particularity of writing - is embedded in theatre. Theatre as a set of interlinked and intertextual elements, writes itself in specific space, specific time and constitutes a series of writings which cohere and are readable within the context in which they take place. The absence of the writer, and likewise the absence of the performer, is not a condition under which theatre fails to take place, but a condition under which theatre continues to act - to provoke a reading. The presence of writing as Artaud foresaw extends rather than closes down the possibilities of theatre and extends the possible readings to which theatre gives rise.   .

In a memorable phrase Jacques Derrida wrote of the spoken word as 'the cadaver of psychic speech' (1978: 240) referring to the status of speech in the dream work and in Artaud's

proposals for a gestural speech; as well as to the classical conflation of writing and death. The phrase can read in several ways: possibly as the chrysalis or cocoon from which the imago (image) or 'final perfect form' emerges, the theatre image as dynamic of equivalent elements; or as that which 'falls' from psychic speech, the cadaver - that which is capable of being converted through the act of writing into 'lifeless matter' (the preserved, inscribed text) - and equally capable of being reconverted, reanimated into resonant image. Derrida's phrase provides a telling image of the difficult and unstable relationship between the act of writing, the resulting text and its performance.

In another context the Portuguese artist Juan Cabrita Reis, whilst speaking of art as 'a discharge of the unconscious that allows one to see without explanation' in a further image of the 'psychic speech' that Derrida refers to - asks whether 'art is an exorcism of death', whether it confirms life. (Celaint 1990) We might well be tempted to agree that this is the case given much contemporary art work which plays itself out on the edge of this final divide - Damien Hirst or Ron Athey for example - but also in the fact that art has always returned to the fascination of death as the absolute determining point of life.

What is the role of dramaturgy in relation to such ideas of writing? Does it simply enable us, like Dr. Nicolas Tulp, to anatomise the text, to open up the cadaverous word (of writing), to understand and conjoin the parts and the elements of performance; or does it enable us to reanimate the text, to once again 'see without explanation', to 'overturn and disturb things' with the solidity of the act of writing?

In what ways can the text in this sense be absorbed into a dramaturgy that understands writing as a sonic, visual, graphic and physical act ? And that the texts that emerge from such an understanding are texts that are played out, realised as much in time as they are in space, are ephemeral and transforming as much as they are preserving and passive? Is the theatre text only a means of for the preservation of speech, of stage direction, of scenic plot, of narrative which through dramaturgical means can be reanimated, represented? Or is the image not one of classical anatomy performed on the dead body of the text, but concerned with an interactive

45

image - the living/ live relationships between the equivalent elements that make up the body of performance, the body of the text, the body of the voice? Patrice Pavis has somewhere spoken of the dramaturg as a 'go-between, inevitably caught in this space between page and stage'; between text and its performance, between performance and its writing.

Graham Swift who recently won the prestigious Booker Prize for fiction (1996) said in his acceptance speech that novels are 'meant for that intimate, silent, invisible but potentially magical point of contact between the reader and the page'. Theatre has also (at least for the last 150 years) provided an intimate space for its reading - the individual listening and watching through the fourth wall from the darkened space of the auditorium - but the intimacy between the writing and reading of theatre is mediated not by the page but by an array of elements in which 'writing' is variously inscribed - the texture or textuality of the elements is always determined by how writing is inscribed in them. The constantly oscillating relation of text to performance - the feedback between form and the dramaturgical or compositional strategies that informs much contemporary arts practice - points towards a dramaturgy of interactive texts which must be predicated on fluidity and adaptability rather than constancy and conformity.

The work of such a widely diverse and different group of artists as Gary Hill, Robert Frank, Marina Abramovic, Paul Sermon, and Ilya Kabakov * cannot be placed under the category of theatre, but is (in part at least) concerned with the conditions of performance and the possibilities (spatial/ temporal/ emotional) that a performative and interactive framework gives to the physical, textual and plastic material that they are working with. There would seem to be a common aspect in the work of these artists which arises from the various ways in which text is placed in relation to the grain of the work. This might be identified as a conscious absence (an eloquent void) that is delineated by text, or by silence. This points firstly towards a kind of text-performance relationship that is qualitatively different from that relationship of text andperformance that is found in theatre where such silences and absences tend to be filled by, rather than voided by text; and secondly to an interactive 'text' that is not predicated on the transcription of speech or the illusion of 'spontaneous speech' but on the ability of each

spectator to interact with, and therefore change and be changed by, a mute text of sufficient eloquence and familiarity to hold the interaction in tension.

The space of Gary Hill's <u>Tall Ships</u> is entirely a 'theatre' in the sense of being a peopled place where one is enabled 'to see', a place where the unseen (the psychic speech that Derrida refers to) is revealed and animated once again.

> Down a completely dark, ninety-foot long corridor-like space, sixteen black and white images of people, varying in ethnic origin, age and gender, are projected directly onto the walls. No border of light defines the frame of the images: only the figures themselves give off light into the space. The last projection is on the back wall, at the end of the corridor. From standing or seated positions ranging from one to two-feet high, the figures are first seen in the distance at approximately eye-level. As the viewer walks through the [otherwise silent] space electronic switches are triggered, and the figures walk forward until they are approximately lifesize. They remain in the foreground, wavering slightly, until the viewer leaves the immediate area. Since all the projections are independently interactive, any number of figures can be in the distance, walking toward or away from a viewer, or standing
> in the foreground, depending on the number of viewers in the space. (Mignot 1994: 98)

Where is the text? Where is the writing? The embedded text is not here the illusion of spontaneous speech, nor the sense of a writing that is prior to performance, but is the sense of texture, woven into the bed of the work as site, as location from which dreaming may occur. Writing is embedded in the poetic silences that are at the centre of <u>Tall Ships</u> - a suspended writing that communicates the intensity of a text whose poetic nucleus is silent.

The silence that permeates the installation (in contrast to many other of Gary Hill's installations which include sound) renders eloquent the individual interactions between spectator and the ghostly projections that fill the long darkened corridor which frames the experience. It is an essentially theatrical experience in so far that it conjures apparent presence from absence. The text as such is nowhere revealed - the installation is an intense experience which whilst using some of the spatial conventions of theatre does not allow for a collective reading of the images

but an individual one. The spectator is drawn into a network of intertextuality: drawing on the history of similar interactions with familiar people as a series of behavioural texts; drawing on the virtual dialogues which seem to take place with each of the sixteen people that inhabit the corridor.

The renunciation of the 'theatrical superstition of the text and the dictatorship of the writer' that Artaud promised inThe Theatre and Its Double has in a sense been replaced by the rethinking of writing not only as phonetic speech, but as itself a material element within post-classical performance. For Derrida ' it is less a question of constructing a mute stage than of constructing a stage whose clamor has not yet been pacified into words.' (1978: 240) Tall Ships finds precisely the speech before words which has not been separated by the logic of representation. The silences of the installation are not mute but eloquent in the interactions that happen between the spectator and the projection of 'ourselves' that occurs.

By contrast Caroline Bergvall's performance installation Eclat - which means, as it moves between languages, both 'dazzling effect' and 'a burst of shrapnel' - constructs a clamorous stage, where writing and text are continually present as sound and as visual sign. The work loosens the relationship of text to space, allowing a text which is literally carried in the ears of each individual to invoke the absent performer as much as it invokes and demands a constant re-reading of the space of performance.

Unlike Tall Ships which is installed and focused in the formal and minimal space of the gallery (and which resists replication through other media) the writing of Eclat (like shrapnel) is dispersed as text in a number of linked forms - as a series of graphic texts within a twenty three minute performance in a domestic and suburban house in London (the Insitution of Rot); as a sound tape that is played for each interactive performer in which the writings form a 'guided tour' of the actual and imaginary spaces of the house; and as a text for the page which evokes ideas of migration between the various 'surfaces' on which writing can take place. The 'surfaces' - are both ephemeral (the speaking voice of the writer, the performance duration of the domestic

spaces where the performance took place last May) or erasable (the magnetic audio tape of the voice, the computer disc on which the text was written) and preserved (the pages shown here on which the performance is reanimated through reading). Both on the page and in the 'live' performance of the text, the work keeps ironically pointing to the frequent ruptures between the play of illusory spatiality in the text, and the reading and consequent perception of the actual space of performance *.

These two brief examples of writing at the extremes of performance when seen from the perspective of theatre, point towards new ways of utilising and thinking how text might operate within theatre and the more general relationship between writing, text and performance. By destabilising and displacing our assumptions about the role of writing and the texts that writing produces, by extending the range of what we include as theatre writings or as performance writings, we encourage theatre to open up the possibilities of the intertextual and the intersubjective and open new, unseen, forgotten, veiled, hidden readings from the interplay of texts at its disposal.

The performance of writing, the texture and materiality of writing, its contemporary migrations across surfaces, across media, however it is 'placed' within, beside, underneath the performance work as a whole, is a central consideration in the development of any new performance and dramaturgic strategies. The recognition of writing not simply as an a priori of theatre, the means of preserving the hidden text of performance, but as a present and equivalent dynamic may further open up the possibilities of theatre.

++++++++

Notes:

*A 'literal' performance of the text Woyzeck for example , that is letter-by-letter , would not be a permissible dramatic interpretation, though it is a possible (though unrecommended) performance reading.

* For a comparative exposition of Aristotelean and Cagean poetics, see Natalie Crohn Schmitt

(1990) Actors and Onlookers, Evanston: Northwestern UP, pp. 5-38.

* In particular: Gary Hill Tall Ships; Robert Frank Moving Pictures; Marina Abramovic/ Ulay

Night Sea Crossing; Paul Sermon Telematic Dreaming; Ilya Kabakov The Reading Room'.

* For a version of Eclat 'for the page' see Performance Research 'On Illusion' Vol.1, No.3 (1996).

A third and extended version of Caroline Bergvall's Eclat has been published in book-form by cris

cheek at Sound & Language (1996), Lowestoft, UK. ISBN 1 899 100 06 7.

References:

Artaud, Antonin (1970) The Theatre and Its Double, London: Calder & Boyars

Bergvall, Caroline (1996) 'Eclat - Occupations des Lieux 1-10' in Performance Research Vol.1,

    No.3 (Winter)

Celaint, Germano (1996) Juan Cabrita Reis Amsterdam: De Appel Foundation.

Derrida, Jacques   (1967: 1978) Writing and Difference London: Routledge& Kegan Paul.

Erickson, Jon   (1995) The Fate of the Object Ann Arbor: Michigan UP.

Fuchs, Elinor (1990) 'Presence and the Revenge of Writing' in Performing Arts Journal

George, David (1996) 'Performance Epistemology' in Performance Research Vol.1, No.1 (Spring)

Marranca, Bonnie (1996) Ecologies of Theatre Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP.

Mignot, Dorine (ed.) (1994) Gary Hill, Amsterdam: Stedlijk Musuem

Acknowledgements:

++++++

(1998)

'Dance, Writing and Unsettled Bodies'

.

.

"Dance, Writing and Unsettled bodies"

Intervju med Ric Allsopp

Torill Braaten

Teatret har etter nasjonsbyggingen i stor grad ivaretatt tradisjonen hvor kunsten er autonom og skjermet. I den grad det tar opp samfunnsproblemer, som incest og vold og slike ting, er det som noe som angår den enkelte og enkeltmennesker i mellom. Performance art og performance relaterte forestillinger har i større grad befattet seg med samfunnsinstitusjonene og samfunnet som system. De samme tendensene kan vi se innen dans. Når dans ikke lenger forholder seg ene og alene til sin egen tradisjon, hvilke strategier kan man da bruke for å definere samtidens dans? Hvilke kompositoriske og estetiske kilder benytter dagens koreografer og skapere av dans seg av?

10   *Du nevner den franske forfatteren Maurice Blanchot; hans kommentar at ingenting kan vises uten språk, og at "skrift forutgår ethvert fenomen". Leser du Blanchot's kommentar som et forsøk på å videreføre og fornye en ren kunstnerisk tradisjon, eller er det et angrep på tradisjonen?*
Mange av de sentrale aktørene innen kunst og filosofi i det tyvende århundre har vært politisk aktive eller hatt et politisk engasjement. Men deres filosofiske eller kunstneriske arbeider er blitt lukket inne i et eget system for å holde kunsten ren.

Jeg er ikke så kjent med Blanchots biografi. Vanligvis er det bare skrevet – Blanchot, forfatter og kritiker, født i 1907, hans liv er i sin helhet viet litteraturen og til den stillhet som er dens særpreg. Hva han sier, er

at det er umulig å oppnå stillhet, men han forholder seg likevel til begjæret etter stillheten. Og også problemet med inskripsjonen. I det perspektivet ser jeg letingen etter form. Danseren innskriver rommet, men i samme øyeblikk som inskripsjonen skjer, er den også borte. Men begjæret er der selvfølgelig etter å bevare denne inskripsjonen som idealisert dans.

Jeg har brukt utsagnet i forhold til arbeider av blant annet William Forsythe, som helt klart kan settes inn i et historisk perspektiv, som sporer denne interessen i vanskelighetene med dans som en type inskripsjon.

Meg Stuarts samarbeid med Gary Hill befatter seg også med begjæret etter å holde noe fast og samtidig det umulige i det. Be-

gjæret etter innskriften som et kjennetegn for det spesifikt historiske eller individuelle eller hva det nå måtte være. Og det problematiske med dette eller det umulige. En kan spore denne interessen tilbake til *Incidental Catastrophe*, en video basert på *Thomas de Obscure* av Blanchot, om en mann som blir besatt av språket, av lesning. Forholdet mellom ordet, det talte og kroppen.

I videoen ligger Gary Hill naken på en strand og han blir så skyllet i land, inn på et bad hvor boksidene er projisert opp på veggen. I videoen *Splayed Mind Out* "skriver" Meg Stuart ord på ryggen med sin venstre hånd. Dette blir tatt opp på video og vist på veggen bak. Imens kommer det en annen danser, aktør inn på scenen og forsvinner i skjermen på en måte som jeg ikke er helt sikker på hvordan de har fått til. Hun kommer altså inn i skjermen og så forsvinner hun bare. Så her har vi hele problematikken med undersøkelsen av inskripsjonen i form av å etterlate et spor på en overflate og på en skjerm og bestemmelsen av en overflate hvor inskripsjonen kan foregå. Også det problematiske mellom begjæret etter taushet og umuligheten i å få tilfredsstilt dette begjæret.

Det er kanskje umulig å oppnå stillhet, enten man ser det som et sluttpunkt eller noe man ønsker å jobbe ut fra. Men jeg har oppfattet Meg Stuarts arbeider slik at hun arbeider i ruinene, alle posisjoner er knust. Ikke bare posisjonen til ballerinaen, men også posisjonen til betrakteren. Det blir en slags omvendt minimalisme. Men hun konstruerer ikke nye posisjoner i disse ruinene, hun forholder seg til feltet og undersøker det gjennom kroppens bevegelser.
Ja, det er også på denne måten jeg bruker termen "ecology". Ikke som en leting etter det essensielle eller noe universielt, en tilbakevenden til "det rene". Jeg anvender det heller ikke i retning av "green-peace" direkte politiske aksjoner. I England skjer det interessante ting mellom performance og "ecology", mellom kunstneriske arbeider

og direkte aksjoner, strategier for å motstå det som blir benevnt som inngripen på demokratiets vegne på felles grunn, slik som bygging av broer, tunneler.

Min andre store inspirasjonskilde er amerikaneren Charles Olsson, dikter og skribent. Han ledet Black Mountain College i perioden da Rauschenberg var student og Cunningham underviste der. Cage var også innom der en tid. Olsson samarbeidet både med Cunningham og andre dansere og jeg tror også han samarbeidet fysisk i noen av det en i ettertid kan kalle happenings

| what we do not know of ourselves/ |
| of who they are who lie/ |
| coiled or unflown/ |
| in the marrow of the bone/ |

som ble arrangert ved Black Mountain under sommerskolene i 1949 og 1950. Aksjoner hvor Cage og Rauschenberg var involvert, sammen med Cunningham, Olsson og andre diktere, som Robert Duncan. Olsson utviklet det han kalte for "field composition" eller "projecting verse" og han var en av de første til å bruke en slags idé om det postmoderne, rundt 1950, så dette er lenge før de fleste andre begynte å tenke på denne type anliggender eller på denne tilstanden. Han bruker begrepet både   11 som en idé om en periode etter det moderne, men også som en idé om hvordan de ulike elementene innen et felt forholder seg til hverandre, på en måte som er ganske parallell til det en kan kalle Cage's este-

| And the boat,/ |
| how he swerves it to avoid the |
| yelping rocks/ |
| where the tidal river rushes |

tikk. Han har en slags sirkulær forståelse av vår konseptualisering av verden og vårt behov for å representere denne som er basert på forståelse, ikke bare en konseptuell forståelse, men gjennom hvordan vi er i verden, med Merleau-Ponty's ord "our being in the world".

or to find in a night who it is

Denne tenkningen har hatt stor betydning for mitt eget arbeide; en komposisjon som er åpen, "field composition", å prøve og bevege seg ut av en tilnærming hvor teori og praksis, performance og teater, blir sett på som motsetninger. Jeg har forsøkt å bevege meg ut i et mer åpent felt, som ikke bare består av tenkning, men tenkning om praksiser og jeg har også ønsket å involvere meg i praksis. Olsson var den som begynte å kartlegge det territoriet for meg. Hans *Maximus Poems* har helt klare inspirasjonskilder. Men Olsson har en blekere visjon kan en si enn Ezra Pound, som er en av disse "fedrene" som han omtaler dem som selv. Olsson mener Pound mislyktes i sitt forsok på å holde ting sammen. Men Pound så fortsatt på den vestlige sivilisasjonen som en mulighet, ikke på samme måte som T.S. Eliot gjorde ved å vende tilbake til visse verdier, men som en mulighet for å holde det hele sammen. Olsson, på grunn av det som skjedde fra 1933 og fremover, ser den vestlige sivilisasjon, hele dette prosjektet fra grekerne av, som noe han omtaler som "the junk of history". På liknende måte som Walter Benjamin, "the rubbish has been blown". Så han begynner derfor å tenke på hvordan vi kan forholde oss til denne verden når det ikke finnes noen konstruksjoner å forholde seg til lenger. Hvilke strategier er det mulig å bringe inn, som kan ha noen verdi? Så han beveger seg inn i "field composition", noe som er et forsøk på å bringe sammen forskjellige typer stoff, historisk, arkeologisk, ut fra havnebyen Gloster i Massachusetts, hvor han bodde. Han så på Gloster som en inngangsport for en mengde med idéer, ikke bare fra det sekstende århundrede, men også fra vikingene og tidligere. Han bygger opp et felt av assos-

dwells in that wood where

shapes hide/

who is this woman or this man

whose face we give name to,

whose shoulder/

we bite, what landscape/

figures ride small horses over,

what bloody stumps/

these dogs have, how they tear

the golden cloak/

——————————————————

iasjoner fra dette bestemte punktet Gloster. Om hans arbeide som kunstner virkelig lyktes vet jeg ikke, men hans idéer er interessante. Og de har hatt stor innflytelse på visse områder. Innen poesien selvfølgelig, men også som vilkår for strategier for hvordan en kan tenke innen scenekunst. Enda mer i dag, hvor vi har så mye tilgjengelig, hvordan kan vi bringe materialet sammen uten å gå tilbake til noen universell eller essensiell forståelse. Eller på den annen side forbindelser som oppstår mellom ting plassert innen en ramme. Olsson forsøker å finne forbindelser på en måte som kan minne om Pounds arbeide, men som er noe han har funnet i den pre-sokratiske filosofien. Han har influert min måte å tenke på, men også hvordan jeg ønsker å presentere stoffet; hvordan jeg legger ut materialet. Jeg synes det er interessant å tenke på historien på den måten han gjør. Han sier "junk of history", men i virkeligheten har han brukt enormt mye tid på å sjekke den opp! Igjen er det snakk om en inskripsjon, det er en oppfattelse av hva som har foregått som bevares i inskripsjonen. Det forsvinner ikke bare på grunn av en holdning som er herskende i samtiden. Det finnes faktisk der og det er viktig å gjøre bruk av det. Det finnes ikke lenger et lineært syn på historien, men det er absolutt noe som finnes rundt oss på den måten at en kan plukke opp og bruke hva en vil. Raimund Hoghe's forestillinger er et godt eksempel hvor han trekker forbindelser til historien og til de argumenter som ligger der.

Det blir et skifte fra avantgardebevegelsen som blir antatt å være i front av en lineær utvikling til kunstnere som tenker kontekst. Men det er også kommet inn et skifte i hva som kreves av pub-

12

likum. Raimund Hoghe's forestilling hvor han la stor vekt på det rituelle, men også denne kontrasten mellom den beinharde virkeligheten som ble presentert i tekstmaterialet og denne kvaliteten, som han selv benevner det, i slagerne av Doris Day, Marlene Dietrich og andre som kommer som perler på en snor gjennom forestillingen. Jeg tenker også på forestillingen som Zer° Visibility viste flere steder i Norge; except that I would like to be rid of it, hvor publikum ikke kan sitte og velge fokus, men blir dradd inn og ut av forestillingen. En må lese av flere lag samtidig og det blir mer det en kan kalle et ambient forhold. Jeg synes det er interessant hvordan Merleau-Ponty går inn i den transcendentale fenomenologien, i denne idéen om at en kan gå tilbake til en slags umiddelbar overført kommunikasjon mellom tilskuer og det som skal oppfattes, og jeg mener han forandrer dette i noen grad. Han jafser nærmest inn i dette og driver det hele mer i retning av det dynamiske og det interaktive. Det interaktive er vanskelig å snakke om nå. Men diskusjonen om tilstedeværelse er gjort mer kompleks.

En kan snakke om dette ut fra begrepet om "the unsettled body". Hvordan kroppen blir fragmentert i måten den blir distribuert på, på forskjellig vis. På en eller annen måte må vi forholde oss til denne mangelen på forståelse for helhet eller sammenheng og hvordan dette henger sammen med nedbrytelsen av perspektivet. I størstedelen av den estetiske dansen, for å kategorisere det, er forholdet mellom utøver og tilskuer utrolig tradisjonelt. Det er statisk, bygget på en visuell konstruksjon som har å gjøre med utviklingen av hele det tredimensjonale lineære perspektivet. Forholdet mellom tilskueren og bildet er standard vertikalt, så hvis vi ikke står og ser dans, kanskje vi skulle, he-he, er vi fortsatt i det forholdet. Det var også grunnen til at jeg nevnte Rauschenberg. Hans idé om at det flate bildets spill ville odelegge dette forholdet. Det blir i steden en overflate som er et felt hvor du kan bringe inn flere ting og som kan bli sett

fra en hvilken som helst retning. Så umiddelbart må en tenke på hva som skjer når en rokker ved det tradisjonelle bildet, den velkjente og normative måten å se på dans på. Hva skjer når det forsvinner? Hva du sier om tekno og ambient influert scenekunst hvor en må involvere seg på alle andre måter enn den rene visuelle, er klart en retning. Andre retninger er de tingene som Steve Paxton gjor eller Judson Church og den type eksperimenter som foregår der, hvor distinksjonen mellom den som observerer og det som blir observert, tilskuer og utover eller danser og ikke-danser, fullstendig forsvinner. Der er faktisk ingenting å se, bare ting å erfare og du forholder deg til en aktivitet som det å gå eller det å løfte. Så på en måte hva som blir viktig er ikke hvordan det blir konstruert innen en tradisjonell visuell ramme, men det blir helt enkelt foreslått som en aktivitet som har å gjøre med vekt og tyngde og overraskende handlinger. Dette konstrueres ikke utfra et visuelt synspunkt, men det konstrueres utfra et fysisk punkt, en annen innfallsvinkel.

"The Praises"
to dream takes no effort/
to think is easy/
to act is more difficult/
but for a man to act after
he has taken thought, this!/
is the most difficult thing of all.

Det er gjennom kroppen, for å følge Merleau-Ponty, at vi har opphold i verden, "our being in the world". Og det er også en gradvis forståelse for kroppen som et sted for flere ulike typer av informasjon, flere subjektiviteter, flere tekster, flere slags rom. Selvfølgelig kan vi se posisjoner, vi kan se det statiske, men vi ser det på en måte som tilhører fotografiet, en bevegelse tatt ut av en sammenheng. Så for å forstå den posisjonen, må en se på den spesielle prosessen som ligger bak og hvordan det er konstruert ut fra kroppen, kulturelle holdninger, tilhorighet, det spesifikke som finnes rundt. En

13

kan ikke se på disse forholdene som noe adskilt lenger. Bildet som interesserer meg, er denne idéen om en performance som noe konstant skiftende. Det er noe ikke-etablert som beveger seg i en kultur. Og den beveger seg ikke rundt som en lukket boks, men gjør linker utad i alle sine bevegelser, i kulturen.

Men ikke så mye som en motreaksjon lenger, nå er det mer et forsøk på å gjøre noe i nuance. Så det man ser er kanskje at etter en lang periode hvor teatret har tatt opp strategier fra performance, har nå performance forestillinger begynt å skjele til teatret?

Ja, jeg har nettopp vært på en konferanse i Hamburg hvor nettopp dette ble diskutert. Igjen må jeg si noe om konteksten fordi dette var et møte for et nettverk bestående av primært tyske, sveitsiske, og østerrikske performance kunstnere. Det foregikk i Hamburg, det var en ganske kontinental forsamling, den delen av Europa. Men diskusjonen gikk mye på distinksjonene mellom performance og teatralitet. Og det som ble vist var helt fra det som absolutt fornekter det teatrale, fordi det blir sett på som en innflytelse som forstener, altså i tråd med Michael Frieds berømte essay, til det som absolutt undersøkte rommet mellom det teatrale og performance art eller hva det nå måtte være. Og dette er veldig interessant i forhold til Paul McCartys arbeide, han arbeider hovedsaklig med video nå. Jeg har sett hans arbeider i København. Lousiana har ikke det en kan kalle en samling; men flere enkeltverk, som alle omhandler misbruk av barn. Saken jeg så på Kampnagel hadde mer å gjøre med kunsthistorien. Han ser tydeligvis på den som junk som han sabler ned på alle mulige måter, men han gjør det innen en høyst teatral konstruksjon. Han bygger et sett med en rollefigur. Denne har store gummihansker, store ører, parykk og arbeider med kunstobjekter som lerreter og pensler som alle er enorme. Så det er litt tegneserieaktig, men det blir virkelig

forstyrrende etter hvert. På den ene siden er det en slags cool performance, hans arbeide er innen performance som medium. På samme tid er han til de grader teatral.

Han sitter ved bordet og begynner å stabbe en kniv ned mellom fingrene, du kjenner sikkert til Marina Abramovic's performance hvor hun gjør dette. Blodet spruter ut og det er veldig morsomt. Du får referansene, kunsthistoriske referanser, action painting og tidlige performance art og det er veldig underholdende fordi du får disse referansene i spill med denne tegneseriefiguren. Men etter en stund begynner han med denne store kjøttkniven og hakker løs. Og selvfølgelig på grunn av disse enormt tykke gummihanskene, tar det år og dag. Men han bare fortsetter og mer og mer blod tyter ut. Han spiller virkelig, du vet at dette er en illusjon, men likevel blir det veldig plagsomt etter hvert. Og folk går. Det gir denne dype reaksjonen, enda du vet at han bare hakker løs på tykk gummi og at hanskene er fulle av tomat saus eller hva det nå er. Men etter som tiden går, forandrer dette bildet seg fra en slags parodi til at selve aksjonen blir veldig forstyrrende i seg selv. Han er veldig interessant i måten han plasserer seg selv mellom teater og teatralitet og performance.

Teater har på en måte forsvunnet som noe interessant i England, det er ikke der ting skjer. Det som er interessant ut fra en konseptuell synsvinkel, skjer innen installasjonskunst, live art, og tidsbaserte arbeider. Men som du sier, det er en økende interesse for teatrale virkemidler. Dette skifter. Der er visse typer koder hvor det er absolutt umulig å snakke om teater på noen meningsfull måte og så plutselig er det fullt mulig igjen. Jeg tror det er der vi befinner oss, enten i muséet eller som Rauschenberg foreslo, forflytter du deg konstant mellom meninger eller mellom konstruksjoner, mellom identiteter og mellom representasjoner. Så disse klisjéene som navigasjon får økende betydning som strategier. Hvordan er du i stand

14

til å navigere som kunstner eller som menneske igjennom det du har tilgjengelig?

Grabber du simpelten tak i noe velkjent og blir der eller finner du måter å navigere på? Det bringer oss igjen tilbake til grekerne, til Dionysos' styrmann som sovner og faller i sjøen. Og de kan ikke finne ham, slik at de får lagt ham til hvile. Dette blir et interessant bilde på noe som ikke er lukket, noe som ikke kan bli ført til sin ende. Denne sjelen blir en vandrende sjel som konstant må navigere seg selv.

Ric Allsopp er en av redaktørene av tidsskriftet Performance Research. *Han er tilknyttet Dartington College of Arts, Devon og Scool for New Dance Development, Amsterdam. For tiden forbereder han et Performance Writing Symposium (Utrecht 1998) og en konferanse med temaet* Ecology/Performance Art *(Tyskland/Danmark 1998/1999)*

Tekstblokkene er tatt fra Archaeologist of Morning (ABCs 2 *og* The Praises) *av Charles Olsson.*

15

(1999)

'Performance Writing'

.

Performance Writing

Ric Allsopp

The relationship between writing and performance - the uses and applications of various writing practices for performance within the historical classifications of theatre, music, poetry, literature - has traditionally resolved itself in a variety of conventionalized (but not unproblematic) forms: the play text; the libretto; the lyric and so on. The study of these forms has until relatively recently been divorced from the study of their performance; even contemporary work on the materiality of writing deriving from deconstructive philosophy and literary theory has largely confined itself to the space of the page. Writerly work that extends beyond the page has found itself either marginalized or ignored in terms of its exploration of relations between writing and performance. Yet at the latter end of the twentieth century we are surrounded by examples and models of such writerly performance work. In short the conventionalised (and therefore often unquestioned) relations between writing and performance are proving increasingly inadequate as interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary arts practices emerge in response to rapidly shifting cultures. Whatever the ambivalent indications of digital media, writing will certainly continue to develop as a technological medium, and as such, as performance; performance (in whatever form) will continue to be an increasingly complex interaction of signifying systems.

Since the mid-1990s the term 'performance writing' has begun to have some currency in the area of experimental and contemporary performing arts, whether referring to an emergent field of practice or an emergent academic discipline. As the writer Caroline Bergvall has noted:

> Performance Writing explores relationships between textual and text-based work when developed in conjunction with other media and discourses. Performance Writing opens the investigation of formal and ideological strategies which writers and artists develop textually in response or in reaction to their own time and their own fields. (1)

Both theoretical interest in 'writing' itself as a subject (2) ; its placing as a distinctive feature within modernist avant-garde practice (3) ; the increasingly cross-disciplinary and fragmentary condition of the arts; and the pervasiveness of the terms of 'performance' as a means of reading diverse cultural practices, have provided a rich ground for the emergence of performance writing as a practice and as a way of framing practice. The term performance writing itself, whilst inevitably evolving into yet another category that refers to an increasingly fixed body of work, is - at least now - still an unstable and exploratory term that attempts to hold in tension both writing and its performance, performance and its writing. It is a frame through which a range of writing and performance practices are brought into view - the texualities of sonic, visual, graphic and movement performances; the performance of sonic, visual, graphic and movement texts.

As a frame performance writing also provides a means for rethinking and understanding a range of arts and performance practices that have remained silent or mute in the face of more traditional ways of looking and reading. Performance writing effectively problematizes and widens the discourse that surrounds the textuality of contemporary arts practice and allows otherwise marginal and peripheral practices into the field of performance research. Whilst the danger of any new discipline or new means of framing work is that the frame itself tends to impose restrictive limits and conventions on practices that were otherwise unimpeded; the benefit is its ability to map and link practices which are often unaware of each other and the new directions and initiatives whch can emerge from such integration and framing. Performance writing is the continuing and transforming relationship between the two terms of its discourse, proposed both as boundary markers and as two terminal points in an open circuit across which the luminous arc of performance writings take form.

The origins of performance writing must be placed within the broad historical context of writerly performance work within and across many disciplines and media. But it also has a more localised history and academic setting in relation to Dartington, a specialist arts college in England where writing in relation to music, to theatre, and to the visual arts and performance, has in one way or another been a consistent and integral feature of its academic programme

since the mid-1970s with links back to the founding of the present Dartington Estate in 1925 (4).
For example 'writing for performance' was an essential specialism in the newly established
theatre degree course (1976 onwards). It was not predicated primarily on ideas of playwrighting
or the literary study of play scripts or dramatic texts, but on the continuing question (and
questioning) of the relationship of writing to performance work, particularly (at that time) on
the uses of writing for performance that emphasised the making of 'physical, non-narrative and
visual' experimental theatre and 'new dance' work, and its relations to wider social and politic
contexts.

The gradual departure of writing (at least in terms of experimental theatre work in the UK)
from the norms of playwrighting and the forms of drama associated with conventional theatre
and theatre spaces during the 1970s and 1980s, was reflected in the continuing and unresolvable
debate around which preposition or connective would best characterise the relation between
writing and performance: writing _for_ performance, which began to suggest a sense of writing
in the service of performance, writing _and_ performance, or writing _as_ performance.

During the 1970s the theatre course at Dartington had looked back for inspiration to the
writerly models and examples of work at Black Mountain College. In 1952 the poet and then
Dean of Black Mountain College, Charles Olson, wrote a course description entitled 'The Act of
Writing in the Context of Post-Modern Man' which incidentally might not only have contained
one of the earliest sustained usages of the term 'post-modern', but also provided a marker from
which an idea of performance writing could emerge. Olson wrote:

> The engagement of each class [...] is the search for a methodology by which each person
> in the class, by acts of writing and critique on others' acts of writing, may more and
> more find the kinetics of experience disclosed - the kinetics of themselves as persons as
> well as of the stuff they have to work on, and by.(5)

There are two key ideas here - i) 'acts of writing' which clearly places writing as performative, as

engaged in physical process, which leads to ii) a 'kinetics of experience' - the literal 'movement

of material' or 'performance of writing' that is found and materialised. As Olson saw it

elsewhere: kinetics as a direct transfer of energy from 'where the poet got it [...] by way of the

poem itself, all the way over to, the reader' (6). The sense of the materiality of writing and the

essentially performative quality of the materials of writing, Olson describes as [being] '...

handled as a series of objects in field in such a way that a series of tensions are made to hold,

and to hold exactly inside the content and context of the poem which has formed itself, through

the poet, and then, into being'. (7)

Forty five years on Olson's course outline still has a contemporary resonance to its vision and its

'placing' of the act of writing'. Its conceptual inheritor performance writing locates itself as

part of the atomisation of literature, music and theatre and so on. In that, of course it aligns

itself 'with the aesthetics of suspicion, disruption and reappraisal which have to such a large

extent determined the frame of mind of this century's effusion of experimentality' (8). The first

Performance Writing Symposium, an international gathering held at Dartington in 1996,

emphasised the materiality of writing and introduced performance writing as it presented

itself at that time:

> The field of performance writing defines writing in its widest sense as the investigation
> of the performance of language. By acknowledging that textual events are produced not
> only through a syntactical and semantic exploration of language but also through the
> impact of its material treatments, Performance Writing is highlighting the great diversity
> of artistic and writerly practices, both within and outside established literary traditions,
> which rely on the use of text and textual elements. Forms of theatre, of poetry, of
> installation art, of video art, of animation, of soundworks and bookworks and electronic
> arts that share and forward an interest in experimenting with language arts thus become
> part of one and the same debate. What is writing? where does it take place? become
> once again fundamental questions when aspects of sonic writing, of visual writing, of
> installed writing, of physical writing or even durational writing are practices defined
> alongside the linguistic and the literary. If pen and paper are still considered the abc of
> writing, its full alphabet has long since exploded into an array of surprising
> permutations. (9)

If performance writing marks the terminal points in between which a field of work crackles and sparks into life, then this is not primarily due to the framework - which only gives some shape and form to a diverse set of writerly practices that are now performing both on and beyond the page in wide range of media and for an increasingly wide audience. The technologies of writing and performance as communicative systems point towards the performativity of the text - writing as it performs itself within its own terms, within its own field. As Patrice Pavis has noted, it is the interaction of signifying systems within performance, and not their history, that is offered to the spectator and that produces meaning (10). The term performance writing brings into focus that interactivity , the transformative play of text as performance.

Notes:

1. Caroline Bergvall (1996) Key Note Paper for Performance Writing Symposium, Dartington, UK.

2. heralded for example by McLuhan in the early 1960s and approached from philosophical (Derrida), structural (Barthes), cultural (Ong), feminist (Cixous) and technological (McLuhan) perspectives

3. for example in the work of Duchamp, Artaud, Gertrude Stein

4. Dartington was founded as a utopian community for rural regeneration and the promotion of the arts by the American heiress Dorothy Elmhirst and her husband Leonard Elmhirst in 1925.

5. Charles Olson (1952) 'The Act of Writing in the Context of Post-Modern Man' in Olson: The Journal of the Charles Olson Archives, ed. George Butterick (Connecticut UP) No.2 Autumn 1974, p.28.

6. Charles Olson (1950) 'Projective Verse' in Selected Writings ed. R.Creeley (New Directions, 1966)

7. ibid.

8. Caroline Bergvall (1996) Key Note Paper for Performance Writing Symposium, Dartington, UK.

9. The Symposium was co-organised by Ric Allsopp and Caroline Bergvall, writer and present Subject Director of the Performance Writing degree course at Dartington College of Arts)

10. in Performance Texts ed. Michael Issacharoff & Robin Jones, Pennsylvania UP, 1998. p.86.

Ric Allsopp is a founding partner of Writing Research Associates and Joint Editor of the contemporary performance journal 'Performance Research' published by Routledge. He currently holds a Research Fellowship at Dartington College of Arts. He initiated the 1996 Performance Writing Symposium and is working with Caroline Bergvall on a second Performance Writing Symposium 'In the Event of Text: Ephemeralities of Writing' to be held in Utrecht in April 1999. <http://huizen.dds.nl/~sdela/wra/IET98>

(2000)

'A Paper in Three Letters and Four Ephemera'

Biblioteca Teatrale, 'La crisi della critica tearale'

ed. Valentina Valentini,

Roma: Bulzoni Editore.

Ephemera

A Paper in Three Letters and Four Ephemera

Ric Allsopp

Like winter snow on a summer lawn,

time past is time gone.

(Random Selection, Murphy's Laws of Computing - May 7th 1998)

Ephemera I:

This paper from which I now begin to read takes the form of an ephemeris : a calendar or table

of daily positions of the constellations. In this case I am imagining these constellations as some

of the projects that I have been involved with over the last few months as a Research Fellow and

as editor of Performance Research. I want also to invoke the idea of ephemera, partly as a means

of replying to the Italian theatre scholar and academic Valentina Valentini, of whom more anon,

and as an image or a term which characterises what I find I am engaged with in the field of

performance research.

The word ephemera refers to some thing or event of short duration: certain small flying insects

which appear at this time of year as imagos (in their final or perfect form) and live only for one

day ; certain forms of printed text or visual materials. The term is also applied to an intense and

short-lived fever . Ariel, that most ephemeral of Shakespeare's characters, describes the reaction

of the passengers to the tempest that Prospero 'by his art' causes to wreck the King's ship: '...

Not a soul/ But felt the fever of the mad, and play'd/ Some tricks of desperation [Tempest I, II].

Theatre (and dance more so) is traditionally an ephemeral art. 'The Tempest' plays with the

transitory presence of its own theatrical devices. Yet in relation to the act of writing the notion

of ephemerality is contradictory, paradoxical. Writing is that which remains, the preservation

and residue of its own inscription on a surface. As such it is static, unmoving, the antithesis of

the ephemeral, and whilst it might require some form of movement to release it, the movement

of the eye across the page, the sequenced movement of the 'page' before the eye, it remains

fixed, immobile. Only by being bounded is Ariel's freedom (as language/ writing) something

rather than nothing as Terry Eagleton observes.

It might seem paradoxical therefore to pursue ideas of writing and ephemerality - those places

where writing remains in an ambiguous relation to a surface, to a place, to a location, where it

resists the the repose of the page, those points of erasure, of ellipsis, of ambiguity - like Aaron

Williamson's analogic 'Shaved Pages - (Tabula rasa)' - where the density of the written oscillates

between the pleasure of the surface and the freedom of the elements. Propero's last words to

Ariel : '... then to the elements/ Be free, and fare thou well ...' The ephemeral and its relation to

performance, to writing, to criticism, to editing is concerning me partially because I am co-

organising at present (with Caroline Bergvall) a second international performance writing

symposium to be held in August this year in Utrecht. The symposium, which is called 'In the

Event of Text: Ephemeralities of Writing will explore ways in which writing can be seen to

function as a time-based, transient, ephemeral artform when played out in the context of

different media and environments. In relation to the ephemeral both performance and writing

play themselves out in relation to ideas of the disappearing text - erasure, silence; to the

ambivalent and ambiguous status of the texts of contemporary live performance and theatre; to

the dispersal of written material through new interactive and sonic media; to the transforming

sites of mobile writing; and in relation to electronic writings, cybertexts and hypertexts.

At this point I expect that you are beginning to wonder why this seminar is called 'The Function

and Languages of the Critic'. For those of you who are expecting things to be as they seem, I

have to confess that somewhat like the passengers on the King's ship you are got here under

false pretences; for those of you expecting things to seem as they are, then here is my

explanation.

A Conference in Calabria: Letter I:

Dear Valentina Valentini,

If circumstances had been a little different, I would have just returned to Dartington from the congress at the University of Calabria on 'Functions and Languages of the Critics' which you kindly invited me to contribute to. I am very sorry that I was unable to come. What follows is what I would have talked about in response to your questions. You sent me the following text:

> Anatoly Vassiliev (director of the Theatre at the School of Dramatic Art, Moscow), in an interview which appeared in 1992 in the first issue of Theaterschrift wrote: 'We live in a period of borderline, in which something has been defined and nothing new has yet arrived to take its place, therefore we live the departure of the old world without having the joy of imagining a new one'. From a completely different point of view Richard Schechner, not as positive as Vassiliev's hopes for a new 20th century Russian tradition, wrote: 'We don't live in a world of unlimited original possibilities. A long neo-medieval period has begun. Or better, if we search for equal histories, maybe neo-Hellenistic. It will be a period of intellectualism linked to tradition. A way of doing based on traditions which is due to the need to support, care for, reuse and accomplish things with limited resources.'

> The crisis of theatre magazines and journals is an evident aspect of the general crisis of the artistic, ideological and production system of the theatre itself, of the absence of points of reference able to characterise experiences that are otherwise rare isolated, yet sometimes exemplary.

> In the past theatre newspapers and magazines focused attention through the critic on the performance. More recently the theatre critic has disappeared in the wake of the new critical avant garde. The processes of theorisation which theatre has gone through in the last twenty-five years has brought about a variety of sectored approaches to the act of criticism. For example the anthropological (or performance studies) approach championed by The Drama Review which by introducing ideas of the performative and the performance event seems to seek the destruction of theatre itself. Or semiotic approaches which create different models of analysis - for example Stefan Brecht's analysis of Robert Wilson's performances, or the work of Patrice Pavis.

How do critics, organisers and researchers reply to this situation? The congress aims to consider the functions, strategies and responsibilities of arts and theatre critics in a moment of particular consumption of the interpretation function. Particularly serious is the absence of artistic literature relative to contemporary subjects that is both reliable and important. Critics appears today to be characterised by superficiality, distance and absence. It is as though the continuity of experiences and cultural memories have been interrupted; the new generation often gets a mainly journalistic knowledge of the artwork.

I note five points here. The apparent absence of 'points of reference' - the now familiar sense of post-modern vertigo; the sectoring of critical approaches - 'performance studies; semiotics etc.; the question of the functions, strategies and responsibilities of the critic in the face of a crisis of confidence; the absence of 'artistic literature' by which I take you to mean writings and documentation from artists concerning their own processes; the interruption of cultural experience and memory. I don't want simply to respond to these issues from the perspective of Performance Research - my co-editors would also have something to say about your questions, some perspectives that will differ from my own. I would like also to come at it from the point of view of my own (small) practice as an artist and from my observations of the practice and work of others. This is localised and caught up also in the particularities of place and time.

You seem to hint at the possibility of returning to a point prior to a moment of fracture which, like a fault line or crevasse, has gradually widened over the last thirty years, though I know from your writings elsewhere on the disruptions between institutional, dissident and radical theatre in Eastern Europe, that you cannot imagine the possibility of such a return. You are right however, when you say 'It is as though the continuity of experiences and cultural memories have been interrupted'. Perhaps this provides the conditions for the upsurge in art and critical work around issues of memory - Arnold Dreyblatt's 'Memory Arena' which raises issues of cultural identity and historical erasure as does the work of Christian Boltanski; the proximities of memory and landscape in the work of Simon Schama; conferences on memory and the body, the proliferation on a small and localised scale of reminiscence projects, work on archives of all types.

Theatre is no longer at the cutting edge of culture within the metropolitan centres of Europe

and north America. It is no longer a focus of innovation, or radical opposition as it was perhaps

twenty years ago; (Raymond Williams was already signalling the demise of the dramatic - or at

least its displacement - in the 1970s in 'Drama in a Dramatised Society') but then neither is

painting or installation art, or contemporary poetry, or dance, or opera - not that all these

media do not continue to have their moments. The ubiquitous triumph of the digital

increasingly surrounds and influences our views of performance. Marianne van Kerkhoeven has

noted that ' the power of dreaming seems to be the only power which modern art has at its

disposal; the powerlessness, the marginality, the small-scale of theatre/ performance audiences

compared to TV - are a fact of the performing arts'. Theatre and live performance are both

vulnerable to as well as dependent on technologies. The history of theatre can be plotted in

terms of technical innovation as well as literary or textual development. Perhaps, if you will

allow me, there is an analogy to be made with the steady demise of the bicycle in the UK

between the 1950s-70s in the face of the increasing availability of affordable cars and improved

public transport. It took the invention of the mountain bike - a rethinking of the gearings

possible on a bicycle - and its coincidence with the 1980s marketing of health and fitness, to

reinstate the possibilities of the bike. Theatre has had its share of mountains: Grotowski's

<u>Mountain Project</u>, Robert Wilson's <u>Ka Mountain</u>, Isherwood and Auden's <u>The Ascent of F6</u>,

Pinter's <u>Mountain People</u>.

Perhaps theatre/ live performance is awaiting its equivalent of the mountain bike. My more

serious point is that since we cannot undo what has been thought, we cannot undo the cultural

and aesthetic impact of new technologies, neither should we reject important forms of

representation simply because they no longer apparently give an adequate account of the world,

or seem to have become secondary media.

The 'crisis' of the theatre as a means of representation during the 1970-80s was brought about by

a wide variety of factors: economic, aesthetic, technological, ideological. The questions of

whose theatre, and theatre for whom (with their attendant notions of space, time, ownership,

view point etc.) seem to be particularly efficacious in problematising and undermining views of

theatre as a fixed and unchanging form. Problems of authority, of hierarchy, of authorship and the discourses around these ideas also put paid to the possibility that theatre could remain a central means of cultural representation - if indeed it has been one at all in the second half of the 20th century. With the introduction of the digital , the medium itself no longer becomes the important factor. As James Boyle has pointed out the information age is characterised by the homologisation of all forms of information - genetic, electronic, demographic - as code. The privileging of code means the medium becomes increasingly irrelevant - or to turn it around - all media begin to participate in a digital equivalence.

Whilst this might be increasingly true as a generalisation, on a localised level distinctions between media, between disciplines, between approaches are still important. We see an increasing localisation of agendas and aesthetic choices - which is where I begin to drift in the direction of Anatoly Vassiliev who stated his position vis-a-vis theatre (1992) as follows:

> In the 1960s (in Russia) ... the theatre examined itself, i.e. theatre was life. Life in the theatre reminded one of real life. But that was long ago. During the past few years the process is such that I stopped examining life outside the theatre. I have been concentrating on studying only life in the theatre, life in the artworld. That means I have only been interested in a particular part of life as a whole, as it surrounds the theatre: the life of thoughts and ideas. Not life itself but the state of the ideas in this life. That is a radical change. As a consequence, I locked the doors of my theatre. And the more you close the theatre doors, the more its reminds you of a monastery. Otherwise we couldn't possibly explore either social ideas, or the philosophy or state of art.' (Theatre as Monastic Community)

I no longer believe (if I ever did) that such monasticism (the equivalent of Eugenio Barba's 1970s notion of a a self-sustaining 'theatre culture') can have much impact outside a localised culture - a culture which is localised not simply in geographic terms but localised within a particular art network. The question arises of what a localised idea of theatre, of performance can do. In some senses our recent issue of _Performance Research_ 'On Refuge' takes up a thematic that opens the question of what are the conditions of work - what kind of refuge is required to produce work,

what sense of 'locality' provides the conditions for performance. Vassiliev continues to represent a strand of 'laboratory' (monastic) work in a time when the ordering and cultural identity of such models is widely challenged as elitist, introspective and out of touch. This is not to challenge the theatre that he produces using such a strategy - since the relation between process and product is complex and is never simply a causal one in terms of the impact of the artwork itself. Yet, as always, the direction, or better the diffusion of artwork, of theatre/ performance, is in the best sense unpredictable, in a Cagean sense unimpeded. Perhaps monasticism is a way forward in the neo-medieval condition that Schechner envisages. Anatoly Vassiliev provides one perspective on this.

The idea of 'ambient theatre' as proposed by Edgar Jager in 'Ambient@temporary/ for the nineties' provides an almost contradictory model where the attempt to find a place to live, a place to present the 'human body' in articificial surroundings, a redefiniing of values, results not in a reclusivness, but in an ambient theatre idea of creating shelters or temporary zones in which people can meet. This is not the shutting out of the world, the closing of the doors to provide the conditions for artwork, but an opening up to the world, a world seen a ephemeral - a constant redefinition of what is at stake, the understanding of a fluid language of theatre, a nomadic view where a temporary zone, a temporary shelter can be constructed outside the bastions of the institutions, an aethetics of the marginal, of the *barrio*.

As Terry Eagleton sees it Shakespeare's utopian solution (in 'The Tempest') to the conflicts that beset him - an organic unity of body and language, a permanent refuge of life within the artworld - is by definition unobtainable. I too see an oscillation - an unstable catalyst where the terms at play - body and language; body and space - remain unresolvable. Perhaps I look for some middle way - a way where the 'rare, isolated experiences' that you speak of are not colonised by (and therefore fixed by) the abstraction of conceptual processes, or appropriated by a reductive physicality, or by the idealism of a transparent shared experience but a way where there is a recognition that theatre/ performance is a shifting dynamic of idea , activity, place.

Ephemera II: Fire Tables

'Fire Tables' is an ongoing sequence of works which in some senses started almost ten years ago, though the first 'Fire Tables' as such were made in 1996. At present they are a series of live performance/ installations, a line of exploration using fire as a metaphoric and actual material. These works have been in the main collaborative, as performance with other artists, or with workshop participants, and in response to particular sites, times and configurations of people.

It is the end of August. The day is hot and sunny. I am walking through streets of Posnan in Poland close to the central square searching for a shop that sells artist's materials. I am beginning to treat the familiar assertion - 'it's only five minutes walk' - with the suspicion it deserves, as one tree-lined street unfolds into the next and the ecclesiastical landmark that I am hoping to see around the next corner, continually fails to materialise. At moments such as these I begin to regret my choice of shoes, and subsequently my lack of linguistic competence in phoning for a taxi in Polish. As I walk I am trying to determine the text that I should write on the stack of paper that lies on the table I have prepared at the Jesuit Gallery. I imagine words as the shells of missing bodies; I play with the idea that the 'I' that writes is not the 'You' that reads. I think of myself sitting at the table writing and that as I write I am also observing an almost life size photograph of 'myself' pinned to another table. How can I hold these two 'bodies' in tension? What is it that occupies the actual and performative space in between them ? Is it the 'presence' of the performance as a dynamic field of elements placed within a gallery space, the attention or lack of attention of the audience that will see the performance?

As I walk I repeat in time with my footsteps the phrase 'what stands between': what stands between a word and its intention, the eye and its object, an action and its consequence, memory and experience, writing and its imprint, a table and a chair, an arm and its gesture. 'Language divides and diffuses whatever lies in its path' as Terry Eagleton puts it. He argues that a unity of body and language is unattainable since the body can never be fully present in discourse because it is a part of the very nature of the sign to absent its referent. 'The solid, unified entity we call a body is fissured, rendered non-identical with itself, by the language which is its very breath'.

This paradox - which perhaps appears to resolve itself in momentary flashes of art, of theatre, of performance - or at other moments of intensification - provides one of the irritants that motivate my work on 'Fire Tables'. What is it that stands between the body and language?

> ... as signs come to surpass the body they also threaten to escape its sensuous control, dissevering themselves from the material world and dominating that which the are meant to control'. In language we deal with the world at the level of signification, not with material objects themselves. (Eagleton)

The shop that I have been looking for suddenly resolves itself across the street just as it was described. The time of walking, the insecurity of the unfamiliar which allows time to expand until it seems to engulf you, no longer seems so open ended, the intensification of 'being lost' recedes and I walk up the steps of the shop and enter a world where the interplay of language is reduced to acts of pointing towards material objects - a dip pen, a bottle of ink - of offering a handful of notes in the hope of an exchange.

In October I am standing outside a small room in Hamburg at Kampnagel X with four entrances that open into other rooms. The gallery as a whole is dark. Eighty people are squashed within the boundaries of this small, white darkened room. There is a table with three glasses on it. The sound of flies. A metal flask. Another, lower table with a photograph of a man lying on his back, eyes closed, who no longer looks like I feel. I have just left, walking backwards obliterating and illuminating my path with a stick and a small beam of light. No-one else leaves. They seem rapt with attention - somehow seized or lost in this moment. Something else is now happening. The table is burning, blue flame runs from the table top onto the floor and forms a pool of fire. Two fire buckets stand on the floor, bright yellow flames reach two meters above the buckets. The heat generated begins to become intense. Hardly anyone moves - all absorbed in this fever that the fire creates, in the burning residue left over from the performance, the ephemeral texts of memory and association. Later, after the fire has died down, I listen to the German performance artist Johannes Lorbeer harangue and insult the audience from a lectern. I watch as he opens a window to the side of the gallery, as he strings a

73

full-size hunting bow, draws the shaft back to its full extent and from the far side of the gallery releases the arrow straight through the window into the night. In this moment a part of each of us leaves the gallery, passing into darkness and then, almost instantaneously returning to a space intensified with the residue of flight.

A Conference in Calabria - Letter II:

Dear Valentina Valentini,

What is it that we are trying to do with Performance Research? I remember meeting with Ritsaert ten Cate in Amsterdam, [founder and director of the Mickery and now Director of DAS Arts] in 1995. We sat at a table in the unfinished building of DAS Arts - an open plan theatre school imagined as a collective space for research - looking down on the huge and beautiful freestanding brass candelabra which stands as a symbol for Ritsaert's view of the interrelatedness of theatre and performance - individual flames connected by circuitous stems . I was inviting him to work with us on our as yet unpublished new journal. Why do we need yet another theatre journal? he asked. A certain disillusionment with approaches to theatre particularly a sense of the fragmentation of theatre as a project was apparent. My answer was partly pragmatic, partly idealist - there is a conversation going on, a diversity of voices, bodies of research and practice both in Europe and elsewhere which is trans forming ideas of 'theatre' of 'dance', of 'performance work' and we feel that if we can bring these conversations together , its participants (readers / speakers) may translate the themes with which we are dealing into the terms of their own practices. Ritsaert ten Cate was not I think, too convinced - though he continues to support the work of the journal.

Our function then is not simply to provide 'readings' of performance work, but to provide resources for people already engaged in the problematics and contexts of performance work, to build an archive. The ' languages' that you refer to will be 'languages' in keeping with the diversity of approaches and strategies in use within an expanded field of performance - no longer a limited language of criticism focusing attention on production, but analytical, visual, literary, scholarly, structural, poetic and oblique languages - a range of resources that contribute to the

thematics we choose to address and which extend and reflect the ways in which the conversation of performance can occur.

Performance Research is envisaged as a site of discourses which can operate within the particular limitations of the media which we have chosen to use: the limitations of book media. The size and shape of the page, the particular way in which books can be presented and handled. Within these limitations we attempt to confront, supplement, support research into those practices which, operating through the medium of performance participate in:

the performativity of writing

the performativity of the photographic image

the problems of documentation

the idea of the archive

the contexts of particular performance practice

contemporary debates around presence, liveness, mediatisation and so on.

We did not establish ourselves primarily as 'theatre' journal even though we comes from a theatre background. Our individual practice on the margins of theatre had shown us that theatre could no longer simply refer to its own histories, its own theorisations, but must be able to participate in any discourse which might shed light on the performative aspects of any media within the performing arts. We felt a sense of responsibility which derived for our own commitments and activities within the field of experimental performing arts from the mid-1970s onwards, and recognised an historical debt to those whose work as critics, as writers, as enablers, preceded ours* and an obligation to the artists and performance makers whose work provided a part of the ground which we move through.

* (particularly Rob Le Fresnais, Steve Rodgers and Gray Watson of Performance Magazine, David Hughes of the short lived Hybrid, Clive Barker of NTQ, Bonnie Marranca and Gautam Dasgupta of PAJ, Richard Schechner of TDR and Marianne van Kerkhoven of Theatreschrift) .

<u>Theaterschrift</u> claimed in its first (1992) issue that its aim was 'the study in-depth of dramaturgical work, which accompanies creative work'. Through the ten issues of the first series (1992 - 1995) starting with 'Beyond Indifference' a telling title, and ending with the equally indicative issue on 'Cultural Identity', the strategy of Theaterschrift was to provide statements and interviews more or less exclusively from practising directors, performers and artists concerning approaches and attitudes to the work of theatre making with minimal commentary from the the editors. In her opening editorial Marianne van Kerkhoven was still able to affirm 'there is a great gulf between the theory and the practice of theatre' and to argue for 'theory as a consciousness of the practice'. Our own trajectory has been considerably different - though we too would espouse as an aim the publication of material that illuminates the creative strategies of performers and artists. Our starting point , and a starting point that reflects our broadly Anglo-American alignment and background, has not been to bridge some irredeemable gulf between theory and practice, but to recognise that the praxis of performance work and the cultural and aesthetic sources of performance work manifest themselves in an increasingly wide variety of guises. For us it has been more a sense of how we place certain types of material in relation to other types of material within the boundaries of the journal. Thus from the beginning our dominant metaphor has been one of a conversation, a conference of differing voices and positions which allows the attentive reader to find insights and connections emerging from the thematic fields of material that we present.

The question of readership (actual/ notional) is important too. We align with Theaterschrift, PAJ, TDR in so far as we are a journal with comparatively small specialist readership (in the order of 1000-2000 thousand) comprised in the main of 'professionals' working the field of performance including of course graduate and undergraduate students. Our 'role' as a vehicle for criticism is a small one in the sense of review criticism of productions - the relative infrequency of publication makes such a role a difficult one in any case. Our role is one of 'research' rather than 'criticism' .

Ephemera III: A Circle in Brittany

I am walking through the 18th century landscape of the Domaine de Kerguéhennec in southern

Brittany. The weather is overcast with occasional rain, the temperature moderate. I walk

through deciduous woodland, across grass park land, along the boundaries of arable fields, and

around the edges of a large ornamental lake. This landscape, like Dartington, is focused around

a series of buildings which may or may not at any given point be visible, but whose presence and

architectures inexorably determine the landscape in which, and through which, I am walking.

The mediaeval manor at the centre of Dartington with its later and 20th century accretions as

surely determines the nature of the landscape of which it is a part as does the chateau at

Kerguéhennec designed for the Swiss banker Hoggeur by the architect Olivier Delourme in 1710.

The parklands of both Dartington and Kerguéhennec are designed to frame the buildings as a

part of the view and to be seen as 'view ' from the framing windows and doorways of the

buildings.

I say that I am walking through an18th century landscape, but what exactly does this mean? The

landscapes that I am walking through, and through which my memory (this text) is now

moving are both almost entirely constructed landscapes and at the same time also landscapes

determined by a particular and (in this case) shared geology - a matter of sedimentation, of

erosion, of glaciation, of relative textures and densities of rock and soil. The landscape through

which I am walking is constructed quite literally on this geology - on a red sandstone

sedimentation laid down in the Devonian and Carboniferous periods. Landscape then, as I am

using the term , is a physical given, the place in which my walking takes place determined by a

geology fixed millennia ago; and a cultural and imaginary construct, a place where my

reflections take place, determined by my own imaginings and expectations as well as by the work

of 18th century architects and gardeners who still structure the vision and directions of my eyes

and my feet as I move through the landscape.

The two places that I am now still walking through share yet other similarities: they are

'heritage' landscapes - that is constructed landscapes which in themselves are to be read as art

works, places where ideas of art work are nurtured. They are also 'working' landscapes that

support agricultural innovation and experiment. Since 1986 Kerguéhennec has also become a

centre for contemporary art and 'a site for an internationally known collection of outdoor

sculptures where major artists have produced site specific works'.

I am walking through woodland above the chateau. My map - which could be a little better

drawn, a little more informative - tells me that I am approaching number 19, a key on the map

for a work in the landscape by the British artist Richard Long. I have already happened across

Marcus Taylor's 'Silver Elevator Distortion' (1994), passed by Giuseppe Penone's 'Charming Path'

(1986); observed Jean-Pierre Reynaud's '1000 concreted painting pots for an old greenhouse'

(1986); felt visually challenged by Dan Graham's 'Two Cubes, One Rotated by 45° ' (1986);

enjoyed my three children using Keith Sonnier's ' Porte-Vue' (1987) as a perfect place for a

grand Ovidian metamorphosis where each of them transforms into the other as they appear to

walk through the sculpture. I am still approaching number 19 - 'A Circle in Brittany' (1986) and

it slowly comes into view as I move up the sloping grass.

I am thinking that it would be interesting not simply to describe my walk through a landscape

in Brittany to you, but to enable you to have a more immediate and tactile experience of at least

a part of that landscape. But which part? Is a landscape removable, is it portable in other ways

than through words? Of course. Maps, paintings, photographs, films, audio-tapes allow us to

participate remotely in particular landscapes. Indeed these 'portable' landscape fragments,

memories, visions, increasingly determine how we react to and behave with particular landscapes

if we should happen to carry ourselves to them - by foot, by plane, by car, by bicycle. Where is it

though that we carry ourselves to <u>through</u> these fragments, these images which we agree to

understand as representations of particular places, of particular landscapes? The landscape that I

am walking through begins to oscillate, to become unsettled, undecided - to be both itself and

somewhere other as I experience it.

I walk up to the very edge of number 19 - ' A Circle in Brittany' by Richard Long. It is the sort of

work that has a edge - though as I move my eyes closer to that edge (which seems so clear and

precise as it comes into view surrounded by grass and bluebells) - it becomes less clear where this edge starts and where it finishes. A circle - rather a horizontal disc - made of darkish red pieces of sandstone, the whole perhaps 20 feet in diameter - each piece of sandstone fitted closely to the pieces placed next to it, a surface of nothing but sandstone until it defines its circumference, that intangible edge where it becomes the sea of grass that surrounds it , a red surface made more so by the light, by the rain.

I am standing now near the middle of this 'Circle in Brittany' and I determine to take a small piece of this sandstone - which at this moment from where I stand is also an 'art-work' - to show you something of this landscape. But as I think this I also know that the very act of taking this stone fragment also transforms it: it already begins to become something else, its particularity shifts and changes in relation to my ability to take it. It begins to become 'not-stone', 'not-landscape' (where landscape means determined by a particular set of precise contexts) as I select it, lift and carry it away from its 'site', from its context; in the same way that it becomes 'art work' as it underwent another process of lifting, selecting, positioning by Richard Long. The stone that I now hold begins to say or do something else - not of its own accord, but by virtue of its new displacement, its new context as for example an example.

As I raise this small piece of red stone from the circle, it too raises a number of questions for me - questions which frame some of the issues surrounding the problem of performance and landscape: questions of scale - the way in which both art work and performance work tend to pale into insignificance within landscape; there are questions of ethics - is it right or wrong to take a piece of this sculpture; and whose 'right' and 'wrong' might that be? There are questions of access too: graffiti on the fences marking the pathways through the sculpture park demand that 'art be made public'. There are questions of form and aesthetics: is it still part of a sculpture by Richard Long when it has been removed from its context in a particular time and a particular place; There are questions of the duration and temporality of the art work: what is the nature of the art-work - where does it begin and end as a constellation of ideas, images, actions, intentions in time and space? These are questions perhaps particularly relevant to the idea of theatre and landscape. Can a site-specific work move? Does it thereby lose its specificity, cease to be the

work - become a simulation of the work? a copy of the work? Is landscape portable? Is this still a work by Richard Long, how does it (still) participate in the processes which Richard Long determined for it? How does this circle of stones separate itself from the other similar stones that make up the geology of southern Brittany? At what point and by what mechanisms does it become a 'sculpture' - at what point does it cease to be a sculpture? How far does this piece of red stone fetishise a relationship to art as 'object', to art as institution, to art as commodity, to particular ways of placing art in contexts? [Like for example in our attitudes towards Navaho sand paintings or marked blackboards by Joseph Beuys, where we - (the dominant western artworld) - determine to preserve and fetishise objects which (like theatre) are made to serve a particular cultural moment, which are made to participate in a specific temporal frame; are essentially ephemeral and transitory. In the case of theatre it is of course the text rather than the performance which has been and continues to be fetishised (think of the line of the dramatic text from Shakespeare, Racine to Ibsen, Beckett, Pinter, Mamet).

Perhaps I should explain here why I felt that taking this piece of stone was an action I could make in relation to my understanding of Richard Long's own process as an artist. A way that is to justify any lingering feelings of transgression, of moral opprobrium brought about by my cultural attitudes to the fixity of the art work as a potentially universalising object , through a recognition of the ephemeral nature of the process which determines what is art and not-art . The circle gradually crumbles and erodes - the light, the rain, the wind, the organic actions of lichens, of rhizomes, the predatory actions of humans like myself, all conspire to reduce this stone to the soil upon which it lies.

All these ideas are also in some sense provoked by, or perhaps 'contained' or latent within Richard Long's work - whether as an intention of the artist or as a residue which springs from the artworks own life as a dynamic of material (sandstone) and representation (circle) - or at least are provoked by the moments of 'conversation' between the spectator (myself) and the artwork.

When I returned here to Dartington I go to the Library to see what more I can find out about this work of Richard Long, part of which I carry with me in my coat pocket . In 'Walking in

Circles' I read the following:

> All Long's sculptures are in a sense stopping points on a journey. They record a moment when everything feels in balance, and in such a place the activity of the artist and of nature seems to be doubly charged, place and materials respond to the artist who approaches them in their own language. He seems to extract from them the explicitness of both time and eternity: the ideas of 'making something out of nothing' and in Richard Long's words, 'making almost nothing'. [....] The work is seen merely as a brief visible moment at a resting place [a circle] during an invisible journey [a line], a knot in the handkerchief of memory, the tie that binds, a punctuation mark or sustained note, with all the fleetingness that that implies. But it is also the residue or trace of the artist's activity, which becomes separated from him and continues to resonate as an idea even after [the circle has disappeared] and the artist and time has passed on.

> "The remainder or residue is that which remains or subsists when everything else has come to a conclusion. If something is complete in itself, perfection, nothing is left over, there is an end of it .If there is a remainder there is no end to it. [Derrida - supplement?] So the remainder is the germ and material cause for what subsists. It is the concrete reality of a thing". [Stella Kramrisch]

My actions as a transgressor, as a catalyst, participate in the idea of art (inclusive of theatre) as a dynamic field, as an undecided and undecidable catalyst within culture rather than as a landscape overviewed from a particular point of view.

A Conference in Calabria: Letter III

Dear Valentina Valentini,

The theatre is never a self-contained form. It always seems to resist the modernist formalism of say the more extreme work of Grotowski (where it slips into expressionism) or Beckett (where is slips into the absurd) or a Schlemmer (where is slips into choreography). Theatre is always a perforated art, perhaps with slightly baroque tendencies, building its practice from its observations and borrowings from other disciplines and other approaches distinct from a modernist credo of self-containment. Seen from another perspective it was the theatrical tendencies of minimalism (or 'literalism' as he called it) in its construction of the relation

between object and spectator that so upset Michael Fried's view of the modernist work as suspending both duration and objecthood.

The idea of an autonomous theatre - a theatre of consisting of narrative, character, scenic hierarchies and aesthetics - what you have called elsewhere 'institutional theatre' (in so far as such a theatre ever actually exists - rather like Brook's idealist notion of empty space) was inevitably disrupted, colonised, transformed by the impact of changing theoretical agendas and perspectives: feminisms, ideologies, identity politics, literary theory, deconstruction, in some respects carried over from theatre's vulnerability as a form. This ability to utilise other discourses, other poetics, began to destabilise theatre to such an extent that theatre as 'seeing place' - as a means of structuring the vision of the audience, could no longer cohere as a perfomative construct. The intrusion of ideas of performance art, duration works, body techniqiue, visual and physical and so forth needs to be absorbed into theatre in ways that can revitalise the basic theatre components of narrative, character, scenic elements, objects. These components are therefore to be always understood as unstable and problematic - responding to the varied contexts within which they are invoked as performance.

Theatre as a 'seeing place' perhaps has to shift from its historical linkages with physical presence in a particular temporal/ spatial dimension, that is within the location of 'theatre'. Perhaps we cannot yet tell what this 'new' theatre, this new 'seeing place' will be like - but we can predict that the basic components that have comprised theatre will still apply even if they are displaced into new media - the holographic actor, the transmissible scene, the ephemeral text. As an analogy writing still struggles with the problematics of mark making - a problematic that perhaps went into abeyance during the main era of print, a problematic that begins with cuneiform, with those originary clay objects strangely reminiscent of Anthony Gormley's 'Field'.

To paraphrase Howard Becker, in art historical terms the primary modes of criticism (within this century) are based on congruent aesthetic theories which have included imitative theories of art (the work imitates its natural contexts), expressive theories of art and institutional theories of art - the context of the artworld itself as institution - the 'art work' is understood no longer as

taking place within the formal network of relations that comprise the physical object (whether we understand this as the performative duration called 'theatre' or the sculptural object), but as taking place in the relations whereby that object relates to the contexts within which it is produced, distributed, discussed. The object disappears - or more precisely transforms and begins to take place between its possibilities as 'pure' concept or 'pure' object - an essentially ephemeral trajectory. As Arthur Danto put it ' 'To see something as art requires something the eye cannot descry - an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld; (1964)

My point is that since theatre is no exception to these aesthetic trends, it too participates in (and finds its vitality and/ or morbidity) in the shifting focuses of criticism - in a new (or perhaps not-so-new) conceptualism whereby the institutional constructs of theatre are confronted with changing critical contexts. It is inevitable that the critical and aesthetic ideas that surround say the work of Rachel Whiteread and Gordon Douglas (to name two Turner Prize winning YBAs) should begin to inform both theatre and the way in which people (critics) begin to respond to theatre. Both Whiteread and Douglas' work is primarily conceptual in its impact, though each produces an 'object' (the house; the screen image] - which is of course a major stumbling block in the works public reception - the relationship between ideas and things. We cannot unthink nor separate images from concepts. Ideas and constructs both emerge from the artwork and provide the fabric of the art work - whether this be theatre, or sculpture or dance or text. The gradual dissolution of the 'object of performance' to borrow Henry Sayre's phrase - yeilds a flux, a solution of theoretical, critical, procedural and technical ingredients. Perhaps we can now imagine performance' as a kind of serum, a plasma that is injected/ projected/ ingested into the body of the audience/spectator, operating as a 'specific' - to use a contemporary (as in 'site-specific') and (neo) mediaeval term.

Types of performance/ theatre open up to types of critical language. Performance Research has tried to include a range of such critical languages and responses - psychoanalytic, formalist, structural, phenomenological , historicist, in its issues. Whilst its field of research is not as wide as the performativity of the everyday (as in TDR) it focuses on the performativity of the elements

that comprise performance arts which of course includes the contexts of the everyday. It is an expanded aesthetics of equivalence - expanded to include theoretical and critical languages as equivalent elements within a poetics of performance making.

Richard Serra argued in his 1990 Yale Lecture that if sculpture has any potential at all, then it is its potential 'to work in contradiction to the places and spaces where it is created'. This 'in-betweenness' (though contradiction is never precisely in-between) is analogous to the idea of performance as a unstable catalyst that I have mentioned above and elsewhere in relation to performance and ecology.

> Based on the interdependence of work and site, site-specific works address the context of their site critically. Site-specific solutions demonstrate the possibility of seeing the simultaneity of newly developed relations between sculpture and context. A new behavioural and perceptual orientation to a site demand's a new critical adjustment to one's experience of place. Site-specific works primarily engender a dialogue with their surroundings. Site specific works emphasis the comparison between two different languages (their language and the language of their surroundings). Unlike Modernist works that give the illusion of being autonomous from their surroundings, and which function critically only in relation to the language of their own medium, site-specific works emphasise the comparison between two separate languages that can therefore use the language of one to criticise the other.

I am aware throughout what I have written here of the dangers of syncretism, of collapsing the discourses that surround a particular discipline, a particular arts practice, into the discourse of another. At the same time this oscillation as I have called it, this sense of fluidity of ideas, of the unstability of things, is the field in which the critic operates in order to open up the possibilities of an artform. A means of constructing the temporary sites and shelters which allow people to meet on an equal basis.

Best wishes,

Ric Allsopp.

Ephemera IV: A Doorstep in Caracas

I run to get my camera. I have to ask the guard to let me into the room where I have left my case and the material for my performance. It is still quite early in the evening, but darkness falls promptly in the tropics - no temperate seasons here. The single light bulb, powered - as all the houses are here - by tapping into the wiring of a street-light or any other convenient cable, which lights up the inside of Señor Hernandez' one-room house, is now hanging outside the front door, illuminating the front step and the path of gold leaf the width of the doorstep that runs from just inside the threshold out into the street. I have been taking photos of the work on and off since about 4 o'clock and have already finished up my film. Señor Hernandez is insisting on one (one more) final photograph of himself with Sally Tallant (the artist) standing framed in the door - an image of the Sacred Heart just visible on the back wall. They stand together behind the lightbulb which hangs in the centre of my viewfinder. This photo will never work, even if I had a film. The two hens in their cage on the front step are being fattened for Christmas. They were brought out specially earlier and placed on the whitewashed step. Senor Hernandez had finished painting the front of his house and the step just before the artwork was to commence at four o'clock. The chickens are usually kept inside to stop them being stolen, like all four wheels that used to be on the shell of a battered red Ford Mustang now resting on concrete blocks under the road bridge which shades Senor Hernandez house in the early part of the day. Senor Hernandez is hoping to do up the Mustang one of these days.

Just after four o'clock Señor Hernandez , having observed the beginnings of the work, had disappeared inside his home and some while later reappeared in his best suit. People dress down in Caracas, especially in the barrios. Even though the barrio skirts Caño Amarillo and the old art nouveau presidential palace that lies close to Señor Hernandez home, it is advisable not to look as though you are a person of property: a pair of good shoes, a watch, even a good cotton shirt. Suits are for special occasions. I push the shutter release. A satisfyingly audible click. No, there was plenty of light. No, it didn't need a flash. It will be fine. We are shaking hands. Senor Hernandez' friends from around the corner have come over. They want us to come and drink with them. We decline. We are drinking with Senor Hernandez who has brought us Polar beers.

What is this? Is it gold? Is it real? What's it for? Did you pay for this, Carlos? No, they are artists from abroad. Artists? What does it mean? It's gold - she came and asked if she could paint my doorstep gold. I didn't think it would look as good as this. I'm very happy, very happy. It looks great, Carlos. We would like this too. How long will it stay? A warm winds is blustering under the bridge. Flecks of gold leaf lift off the step and the street. Perhaps it will rain later. The bridge will provide some temporary shelter. One of Senor Hernandez' friends arrives with more beer. Is this art? It looks good - it looks good for Christmas too. Let's go and dance. Yes, later - we have to clear our things. It begins to rain . Señor Hernandez stands in his doorway smiling.

<div align="center">•••••••</div>

References:

Barba, Eugenio (1979) 'Theatre Culture' in The Floating Islands, Holstebro: Odin Teatret,   ·

Becker, Howard S. (1982) Art Worlds Berkeley: U.California Press

Boyle, James (1997) Shamans, Software & Spleens: Law & the Construction of the Information Society, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP

Dreyblatt, Arnold (1997) 'The Memory Arena' in Performance Research 'On Refuge' Vol.2, No.3 (Autumn)

Eagleton, Terry (1986) William Shakespeare Oxford: Blackwell

Jager, Edgar (1997) 'Ambient Theatre/@Temporary/ for the nineties' in Datum Amsterdam: NTI

van Kerkhoeven, Marianne (1992) 'Beyond Indifference' in Theaterschrift, No.1

Sayre, Henry M. (19..) The Object of Performance Chicago: Chicago UP

Serra, Richard (1992) 'The Yale Lecture' (1990) in Art in Theory eds C.Harrision & P.Woods, Oxford: Blackwell

Schama, Simon (1996) Landscape and Memory London: Fontana

Semin, Didier (et al.) (1995) Christian Boltanski London: Phaidon

Seymour, Anna (1991) Richard Long: Walking in Circles London: Phaidon

Williams, Raymond (1991) 'Drama in a Dramatized Society' (1977) in Drama in Performance Milton Keynes: Open University Press

Vassiliev, Anatoly (1992) 'Theatre as Monastic Community' in Theaterschrift No.2 Brussels: Kaaltheater

Williamson, Aaron (1997) 'Shaved Pages- (Tabula Rasa)' in Performance Research 'On Refuge' Vol.2, No.3 (Autumn) pp.56-57

(1999)

'On Immobility'

On Immobility

Ric Allsopp

Tram Tracks I:

I am sitting at a table in the cafe of the newly completed Tanzhaus in Düsseldorf. It is raining. I am sitting parallel to the large glass front wall of the building which looks out onto a courtyard bounded by iron gates and railings. The Tanzhaus occupies what used to be the central tram depot in Düsseldorf. The tram tracks, which enter the courtyard through the gates and fan out into single tracks each with its own separate entrance to the depot, now disappear under the floor of the new art space, stopped in their tracks. The friend with whom I sit remarks that it is only ever one or two ideas that really alter things for the individual, that open up new landscapes; the rest disappear without trace. Outside in the rain men and women wait surrounded with bags of cheap consumer goods for the coaches that will take them back through the slow hours and days to the east, to the margins and peripheries of europe.

Iconoclasm:

The three companies that I wish to refer to in this paper - Baktruppen , Societas Raffaello Sanzio, and Goat Island - take such different approaches to the problems of presence and representation and their utilisation of time, space, body, object, text - that it is difficult for me to place them together under a category of 'Iconoclastic theatre'. I am interested in the relations between presence and representation, between periphery and centre, between body and environment. I am not so interested in whether the theatre work that has been brought together to form the Iconoclastic season of work is either 'iconoclastic' in the sense of 'destroying images' or is 'a new phenomenon or force in theatre'. In many ways the work seems to reinforce the idea of image in its exploration of the representational conditions of theatre. Nor am I so interested in what seems to me to be a partial and reductive division of theatre making into categories of 'mainstream' and 'post-mainstream' - categories which all too easily reflect a geography of performance determined by a network of producers and producing venues.

I see the terms of presence and representation, periphery and centre, body and environment

(which lie at the heart of questions concerning theatre and performance) no longer in

opposition to each other but as describing a dynamic and fluid field of practice and enquiry

that reflects the unstable, unsettled, dispersed, contingent and problematic cultural conditions

that typify a post-industrial, post-modern sensibility - a sensibility which is no longer located in

the urban centres of europe and america but that is becoming increasingly globalised.

Iconoclasm understood as the destruction of images - a destruction that hopes to bring about

radical change - is no longer a possibility under these conditions - or where it is, it operates at

a level of detail and specificity that is more or less invisible to the general view. As Baudrillard

has pointed out, art has already disappeared as a symbolic pact: 'the capacity of art to negate

reality, to set up an 'other scene' in opposition to reality where things obey a higher set of rules,

is gone' (1994:14). There is now only the possibility of setting up temporary zones of consensus

(as Edgar Jager has proposed in his polemic on 'ambient theatre' (1997) - at least that is, outside

of mass media. The project of art is to take up the fragmented world and find its living

connections not in an attempt to reconstruct ideological monuments - the art object or

performance as 'symbolic pact' - but to create a temporary zone of coherence. Such meeting

places or temporary zones are essentially localised, sometimes manifesting within the

boundaries of the institutionalised art world, sometimes elsewhere. In this sense a marginal

theatre exists. It is not at the level of 'theatre' though, but on the wider level of developments in

new technologies, in cultural or political alignments, that our views of 'the real', the 'virtual',

the meeting place of images, of representations (the sites of the body, of text, of performance)

are confronted and transformed.

This marginal theatre, which partially inherits the aesthetic traditions of experimental theatre, is

not predicated on a historicist view of theatre, nor on a regional or geographical view of

peripheries or margins but on difference - the presence of different voices and visions - as much

within the centre as on the peripheries. It is predicated on questions that have had no precedent

within the discipline, on cultural, political and technological perceptions that shift the

discussion away from the conventions of the discipline, and locate it in ideas of slippage, of

defocussing, of distribution, of refusal or resistance; on a more profound shift of values, of

attitudes towards visuality, textuality, identity and embodiment - in short on the recognition of

difference at all levels.

Knut-Ove Arntzen has proposed an aesthetics of equivalence where the elements of theatre are

manifested in non-hierarchical relations and where a 'system of axes' focus the point of gravity

between equivalent elements according to the particular circumstances of the theatre event

(1990:44-6). This equivalence extends to textual, visual, physical strategies. The relation between

text and image in terms of dramaturgy is also equivalent: the operations used to develop text

are the operations used to develop image. The strategies are deconstructive - recognising the

ideologies and assumptions that make up both text and image: the textuality of images, the

visuality of text. The distinction between hierarchical and non-hierarchical theatres that Knut-

Ove Arntzen proposes provides a means of understanding the differences between the work of

Raffaello Sanzio and Goat Island - both of whom work (over extended time periods) to construct

points of engagement with the zero condition of hierarchical theatre - and of Baktruppen whose

equivalent and non-hierarchical dramaturgy would seem to approach the zero condition of

theatre from an altogether more arbitrary and contingent direction.

Heiner Muller noted that 'theatre has to find its zero degree again and again' and in their

differences the three companies are primarily concerned with an exploration of the basic

conditions of theatre - representation, physicality, identity, presence. If 'theatre' no longer

holds as a means of adequately describing or categorising the type of performance work that is

proposed by Baktruppen, Goat Island and Raffaello Sanzio - it is because 'theatre' as a

conventionalised means of seeing is no longer adequate to the conditions of contemporary

culture or to the aesthetic explorations that these marginal theatre undertake.

This is not in itself a new thought. The 'post-dramaturgy', as Valentina Valentini has described it

(1998) of Heiner Müller's work already steps outside the boundaries of theatre (not into a 'post-

mainstream' but into temporary and contingent zones of the performative). This marginal

theatre steps into a non-synthetic and non-resolvable dramaturgy where the conventional terms

visual, textual, somatic, perceptual, spatial are not replaced by a set of equivalent terms, but by a reduced and contingent sense of ambience, oscillation, indeterminacy, ephemerality. The elements of performance move through a non-hierarchical equivalence to collapse into slippage, resonance, virtuality, vulnerability.

I see on the one hand a 'theatre' shored up by the hollowness of its own conventions, shutting out the world, creating an 'other scene' that ghosts the real, remembrance, repetition, interpretation, no longer a vision of possible worlds for use; on the other hand I see a 'theatre' which opens up a landscape, a vision of possible worlds, a zone of temporary coherence. Elements of both of these views of theatre are present in all three companies: the ethical dimensions of Goat Island, the equivalences of Baktruppen, the immobility of Raffaello Sanzio. Heiner Müller felt that 'theatre [was] necessary when history is stalled, because it foresees that which is missing; and that which should be aimed towards; whereas revolution has no more need of theatre.' Valentini writes that:

> The dramaturgy of Heiner Muller must always be destabilised, avoiding any type of trait that could risk reducing it to a commercial formula, changing continuously, refusing to develop the function of spokesman of the powers that be, that have traditionally manipulated the theatre by way of reconciliation of conflicts and sublimation of rebellion. In order to contradict this edifying role [...] the writer must be capable of renewing the actual means of expression, capable of inventing new forms of writing for the stage, consistent with a pressing, traumatic and contradictory reality. (1998)

Such a view of the 'post-dramaturgical ' role would seem to inform the work of marginal or temporary theatres which operate within contradictory realities where immobility provides both a condition for its presence , and a condition for its absence.

Immobility:

The critic Jean-Louis Baudry has seen the immobility of the spectator as an essential condition of both 'cinematic pleasure' and cinematic illusion. He has compared cinematic spectatorship to the prisoners in Plato's cave who chained and unable to move can only see what is in front of

them, 'because their chains will not let them turn their heads' (quoted in Walsh, 1997:40-45) . By

analogy immobility is perhaps also an essential condition of a conventional theatre: that is the

immobility of the audience/ spectator particularly in relation to the creation of an illusionistic

and formal theatre. Immobility has several aspects : the immobility of the image (Raffaello

Sanzio propose the creation of a timeless theatre ' walled in and immobile' - a 'barricaded

theatre' in which the immobility of representation as image allows exploration of the very

conditions by which representation and presence are made possible); the immobility of the

spectator which allows the illusionary effect of theatre to take place and also becomes an

essential condition of the act of theatre; the conventional immobility of the theatre space (from

17th century onwards), and its inability to maintain aesthetic distance and coherence if this

immobility is challenged. It is perhaps interesting to note that as in forms of popular theatre

such as vaudeville 'during the 'primitive' period (of cinema) the space of the film theatre and the

screen space were clearly separated - with viewer free to interact, come and go, and maintain a

psychological distance from the image'. (Walsh, 1997: 40-45)

Heiner Müller talks of 'the destruction of the prison that is society, history and ideology' - the

immobilising accretions of ideologies and conventions. In the second act of Hamletmachine,

Ophelia declares 'I will smash the instruments of my imprisonment to pieces; the chair, the table,

the bed' - which are not only read as primary icons and elements of the everyday, but also the

primary objects which imagery (and therefore ideology) gathers around within the theatre. For

example the extraordinary image of the electrified bed in 'Amleto'. Iconoclasm suggests the

possibility of breaking with form, of breaking therefore with that which is immobile, and of

creating a theatre which takes on discontinuity, mobility and a play of equivalence. Both Goat

Island and Raffaello Sanzio choose precisely an immobility of spectatorship, and an immobility

of image circumscribed by the setting to investigate the conditions of for example physical

impossibility, repetition or endurance, or the autistic silence of the text and the physicality of

the actor.

In contrast to the cinema and the conventionalised theatre, interactive virtual realities establish a

new relation between body of the viewer and the image. The spectator is no longer chained,

immobilised, anaesthetised by the apparatus which serves him or her ready made images: and

where she now 'has to work, to speak, in order to see'; in these marginal theatres however,

immobility remains an essential construct for understanding the conditions through which the

image is made possible.

Bodies & Conditions:

All three companies invite the spectator to address questions of the nature and operation of

representation and physical presence in the work- a further zero-degree of theatre. In the

introduction to 'The Connected Body?' I wrote about the double status of the body as both

representation and presence. This idea locates two states in an ambivalent and oscillating

relationship - undecidable, and unresolvable.   I think that it is a useful construct with which to

read the functions of body and image:

> The double status of the body in performance has become fundamental to its articulation
> in both modernist and post-modern practice . The body participates as a focus of
> experiment: as an experiential site - as presence, a dynamic, moving, transforming and
> resistant body; and as a site of representation - as reference, as object, as a complex of
> meanings. This oscillation of status resists any surety or fixity which might reduce the
> body in performance
>
> to either mere representation [the 'reflection of an existing proposition as though it were
> a fact' as Alan Read has put it] or simple biological presence [a notion of a transparent
> and immanent presentness]. The body in twentieth century performance becomes an
> ambivalent site which offers modalities of presence and reference, of physical activity
> and image. (Allsopp, 1996: 6)

Such a view proposes the unsettled or unstable body and the unsettled or unstable image as a

condition of contemporary performance and theatre work. The deconstruction of the image as a

potential carrier of ideologies and the questions that surround the representational functions of

theatre and performance are I believe opened up by readings of the performance body in

relation to image which treat those elements as both equivalent and inseparable.

In Raffaello Sanzio's <u>Amleto</u> the body of the performer is staged as the location of the performance image, determined as much by our presence as spectators as by the scenic environment he finds himself within. The immobility of the image constructed on an equivalence of the text 'to be AND not to be' sets up an oscillating impasse between the actors physical presence (his attempt to reach an impossible clarity and transparency of being) and his image or representation (his attempts to use language to articulate his situation). The image of the whole, mirrored in the body of the actor, is hermetically sealed, literally playing within the proscenium - establishing an 'other' illusionary scene - that sustains itself at a kind of zero-degree of representation. The image that is created by the dynamic between body and scenic environment renders him mute. There is an analogy with the linkage of batteries - the flow of electricity between terminals causing (e)motion, noise, explosions, the arcing between terminals, heat. The body of Horatio can never achieve a purely transparent presence - only a mediated presence inscribing and tracing itself within the 'scene' that both frames it and immobilises it. The play of 'to be AND not to be' - the play of graffiti on the wall - the constant slippage between the present and the absent. The whole 'other scene' which is created between presence and representation is betrayed by 'leakage': the leakages of the actor's body in piss, and excrement, the leakage of the voice in parallel with the leakage of electricity, of explosions, of gunfire - the 'electrified' scene that determines the dynamic of the actor. We are forced to watch the hermetically sealed box of the set containing an almost sealed body; the sealed fluids of the batteries encased and immobilised - the flow of fluids from the broken light bulbs, the leaky body, the cupboard, the fingers that protrude from the metal slit in the metal 'mother'. The leaky body of Horatio, the body 'turned inside-out' reveals in its traces (writing, blood, urine, excrement) the evidence of 'Hamlet' as idea, as image.

The imprisonment and immobility of the body takes place on both conceptual and literal levels.We are sucked towards the mute space of the image - immobilised as viewers as Horatio is immobilised as actor by the condition of theatre - neither presence nor representation - a mute inscription ' walled-in and immobile, eternal as an inscription on a tombstone' as Valentini has put it (1997: 58) - erased to a single letter A which homophonically reads as an italicised *è* : to be . The letter, the literal, is both beginning and ending immobilised in the present and

imprinted on the back of the actor by the anarchic machine of his theatre linking him to his determining and 'originary' text. The theatre of Raffaello Sanzio challenges the process of representation itself even though it has to do so through representation. Phillip Auslander has spoken of this as ' ... an elusive and fragile discourse that is always forced to walk a tightrope between complicity and critique'.

In the theatre of Goat Island we watch ourselves watching the image-flow of the performance space. Immobility is what we are pushed up against - the Memory Man in 'How Dear to Me ...' , the limits of endurance in 'It's Shifting Hank' as they perform the crawl or as Joe Ben lifts his head from the cubic foot of water for the ninth time, as the impossibility of Tom bringing the boat nearer becomes the moment that oscillates been presence and absence, between presence and it's memory.It is a theatre that constantly reexamines the moments of immobility between risk and control, which is constantly forcing itself and us as complicit spectators back those the points of immobility through which the moral and ethical dimensions of our lives begin to open. In this sense I see Goat Island's work not as iconoclastic, not 'breaking' images, but testing their resistance (and thus political use) against the realities and values that determine us. The resistant (not but 'leaky') body pushed toward the impossible movement, the dynamics of repetition and endurance, as the performer move through moments of representation, of characterisation. The repetition of the image - as the means of a 'resistant' theatre of the body - is touched upon in Matthew Goulish's (continuing) series of 'Microlectures': '

> [A producer named Rollo went to see 'It's Shifting Hank']
> Rollo said: 'What is the reason for all this repetition?'
> And I said: 'What repetition?' (1997: 95)

The concern with repetition (with immobility in my sense) becomes an opening into the 'other' the possibility of moving through into another landscape, another way of understanding the immobility and impossibility of our situation. A way charged with hope. In 'Repetition & Impossibility' Matthew Goulish writes that:

...[I]f we picture our lives taking place on a calendar - a desk calendar, the kind with one
date on each page, and all the pages stacked up - if we picture each day of our lives
taking place on the surface of one of these pages - and we drill out and remove a core
sample of this calendar at any particular moment - for example, the moment when one
wakes up in the morning and gets out of bed - then we line up all these moments in a
row - one could see oneself in a kind of film, each frame of which shows a different
picture of one getting out of bed in the morning. In this way, one could say, 'I am
always waking up. I am always getting out of bed. Every time it's different. This is my
life.' (1997: 98)

The slow and meticulous process of image making through bricolage, through repetition,
through copying and imitation begins to open up into embodiment, or what Carol Becker called
in relation to their work, the 'physicality of ideas' - finding a form to 'accommodate the mess'.

Accommodation - the housing of the image, the immobility of the theatre is what in many
senses the theatre of Baktruppen resists in their (by comparison) spontaneous compositions in
relation to given spaces, to given starting points. For Baktruppen step across the boundaries of
expectation in dictating and gesturing to the play of everyday life - the performativity of the
real. Or rather Baktruppen come closer to an 'ambient theatre', to creating temporary zones of
performance, temporary shelters and accommodations. As has often been pointed out there is no
attempt to seduce the audience into any kind of illusion - what you see is what you get, and as
such what we get is a another perspective on immobility - the zero degree of the the space and
time of the performance constantly brought into question. Edgar Jager in his polemic on
'ambient theatre' describes the impact of Baktruppen 'behaving as if there was no theatre and no
time span' (1997), questioning the relationship between image space and audience.

The theatre of Baktruppen seems to me, in its use of a strategy of equivalence to come much
closer to the notion of the *dérive* - the drift and slippage of imagery that challenges our
expectations and ideas of spectatorship and immobility, of image and immobility, and in doing
so maps a psychogeography of ambient performance or ambulant performance based around
embodied and decentered subjectivities. Amelia Jones speaks of 'the new experience of

subjectivity as embodied rather than transcendental, as in process, as engaged with and

contingent with others in the world and as multiply identified rather than reducible to a single

'universal' image of the self.' (1998: 197) Through a strategy of responding to the dynamics of

particular space/ site/ circumstance Baktruppen approach the idea of an open and ambient

theatre that sets up a temporary shelter or site within which an event can take place.

What is the place of the text in these three theatres? How does text operate? In the work of

Raffaello Sanzio the originary text of 'Hamlet' has become mute: the possibilities of text as (say)

dialogue, as a means of communication between the personae of the play, are shut down. Like

the image of the battery, text is treated as a stored, repressed fluid that leaks out of the body of

the actor in sporadic monosyllabic utterance, or erupts in a violence of self-inscription on the

body of the actor and on the walls of the cell (battery?) that he inhabits: a graffiti which

through transliteration and gradual erasure reduces text to the primary letter 'A'. Text performs

itself literally through flowing onto those spaces and surfaces of the theatre where text is

conventionally absent. The muted/ autistic body of the actor forces the text to reveal itself on

rather than in the body, to appear as the writing on the wall, the remains of a physical action.

By contrast the multiple, prolific and appropriated texts of Goat Island serve as collages of

memory, identity, of fragmentary and fragmenting narratives. Texts as utterance echo the limits

of physical endurance that the actors push their bodies towards. The effect is of a textual fabric

that supports a broadly narrative movement, which in turn forms a vocal counterpoint to the

physical imagery of the performance, and which stays within the conventions of a theatre text

based on a montage of monologues. Textuality and physicality accompany and complement each

other. This is again in contrast to the often random textual utterances of Baktruppen - often

mediated through physiologically altered voices - through for example the use of nitrous oxide,

or electronic distortion or live mixes - crossing languages, improvised and responding to the

conditions of the temporary zones of performance that they have established.

Tram Tracks II:

I am sitting at table in the Neues Berliner Kunstverein - a gallery in Berlin. Later in the evening

the table will become the site of a small performance that I will make for an audience of perhaps

80 people. I watch the interplay of indifference that takes place at the window. The framed, lit

presence of Ulrich Lepka absorbed in his tireless, obsessive observation of the water droplets that

fall into a iron dish partly filled with sand from a metal tap placed above the table at which he

sits, the precise and graded markings he makes on the paper on the table in front of him. The

indifference of the passers-by on the rainy pavement outside the window turning to glance at

the figure at the table , the trams that rattle past, faces lit inside by the yellowish glare.   A

young man passing on the pavement stops to watch. He stands for a while, drawn into the slow

rhythms of the work, then raising his hand, he slides open the window and steps through the

gap. The sounds and movements of the street rush in.

◆◆◆◆◆◆◆

This paper was written for the Iconoclastic Theatre Conference, organised by Gordana Vnuk and

Chapter Arts in November 1998.

References:

Allsopp, R. & deLahunta, S. (eds) (1996) The Connected Body? Amsterdam: AHK

Arntzen, Knut-Ove (1990) 'A Visual Kind of Dramaturgy ...' in Small is Beautiful,

        (ed.) C. Schumacher, Glasgow: TSP.

Baudrillard, Jean (1994)   'Transaesthetics' in The Transparency of Evil, London: Verso

Goulish, Matthew (1997) 'Five Microlectures' in Performance Research, Vol.1, no.3 'On Illusion'

Jager, Edgar (1997)   'Ambient Theatre@temporary:/for the nineties/' in Datum, Amsterdam:

NTI

Jones, Amelia (1998)   Body Art: Performing the Subject , Minneapolis: University of Minnesota

                Press

Valentini, Valentina (1998) 'The Post-Dramaturgy of Heiner Müller', unpublished article

Valentini, Valentini (1997)   'The Oresteia of the Societas Raffaello Sanzio' in Performance

Research, Vol.2, no.3, 'On Refuge'

Walsh, Jeremy (1997) 'The Media-(ted) Landscape: Image becoming Context' in kitsch,

no.14,'Screens'.

•••••••

(2000)

'The Location and Dislocation of Theatre'

The Location and Dislocation of Theatre

Ric Allsopp

> Representation reproduces the Other as the Same. Performance, insofar as it can be
> defined as representation without reproduction, can be seen as a model for another
> representational economy, one in which the reproduction of the Other as the Same, is
> not assured. (Phelan 1993: 3 quoted in Irit Rogoff, 1998: 130)

Frames:

In what follows I argue that it is necessary to look at and to reposition theatre not simply within
its conventional framings but increasingly in terms of the contexts and locations within which it
takes place. This suggests an expanded idea of how theatre as both process and representation
operates not only within its conventional boundaries (fixed space, closure, coherence, visuality)
but beyond them. It also refers to an expanded idea of 'theatre' as a hybrid form of performance
that includes strategies informed by dance, installation work, time-based work, site-specific work
and so on. It implies that the 'ethical' dimension of theatre is not entirely 'contained' in its
representations (as is suggested by conventional views of theatre) but lies within its processes
and contexts. Theatre in this sense is not simply located as a representational system, but as a
cultural catalyst. Whilst theatre will of course maintain its traditions and forms, it has also to be
seen as a fluid, interventionist medium. It is this shift in rethinking the possibilities of theatre
that might loosen attitudes towards the place and importance of theatre that operates on the
margins and peripheries of the cultural mainstream; theatre that confronts and interacts with
localised rather than international, cultural and aesthetic agendas.

The question of 'how' theatre is 'looked at' or seen, rather than the question of 'what' is seen -
the 'what' that is selected or framed by producing networks and agencies - is a question usually

left out, erased by the assumption that 'how' theatre or performance are seen is in the end 'up to the spectator'. It is a consideration that remains invisible, at least until such a moment when the theatre itself breaks through the barriers of assumption and unspoken convention. It is perhaps interesting to consider the question of 'how' theatre is seen in the light of Foucault's definition of power: 'a net of relationships that weave through the entire social fabric like invisible mechanisms which discipline and regulate the consciousness and the body of the individual by submitting them to a set of 'truths' and norms.' [Petersen,1998:31] . It is these power structures, these often invisible mechanisms, that constitute the 'truths' and 'norms' that constrain what theatre is or can be. It is the frames and conventions that are not questioned, the ways in which theatre is located and understood within sets of assumptions of what should constitute its boundaries, that are the focus of this paper.

Last November I was invited to present a paper for the 'Iconoclastic Theatre Symposium' at Chapter Arts in Cardiff, Wales. 'Iconoclasm' - the breaking of assumptions and conventions - suggests that the question of 'how' we see theatre (in this case the work of Baktruppen , Societas Raffaello Sanzio, and Goat Island) is in itself central to the work. We cannot separate how the performance constructs itself, from the context within which it is located, or from the networks that allow its production. In Cardiff I spoke about 'the immobility' of the theatre image, and the difficulty of 'breaking' a cultural frame that is already fractured, and dislocated. (see Allsopp, 1999:84-93)

So far then there are two dynamics: on the one hand , the tacit acceptance of a conventional frame; the relative invisibility of the question 'how do we look?'; and on the other, the difficulty and challenge of looking, when art and its conventional cultural frames are dislocated and fractured. This implies the possibility of a continuing shift from 'looking' or 'viewing' to 'participating'. How do we participate in acts of theatre that locate themselves in the public sphere without reducing or normalising those acts to familiar and thus culturally undisturbing frames?

I am sitting at a table in the cafe of the newly completed Tanzhaus in Düsseldorf. It is raining. I am sitting parallel to the large glass front wall of the building which looks out onto a courtyard bounded by iron gates and railings. The Tanzhaus occupies what used to be the central tram depot in Düsseldorf. The tram tracks, which enter the courtyard through the gates and fan out into single tracks each with its own separate entrance to the depot, now disappear under the floor of the new art space, stopped in their tracks. The friend with whom I sit remarks that it is only ever one or two ideas that really alter things for the individual, that open up new landscapes; the rest disappear without trace. Outside in the rain men and women wait surrounded with bags of cheap consumer goods for the coaches that will take them back through the slow hours and days to the east, to the margins and peripheries of Europe.

The tram tracks (once at the heart of the public transport system in Düsseldorf) which are now 'disappeared' under the floor of the new art space invoke (for me at least) an image of the cultural and conceptual 'institutionalisation of art and the ability of a culture to absorb and therefore effectively erase the art works ability to act as a cultural, social or political catalyst. The disappearing tracks also invoke an image of rupture or dislocation between the 'work' of art as a cultural practice and the economy and context within which it chooses to locate itself. Its very dislocation marginalises it in relation to the necessities of those people who wait outside in the rain. It also raises the question of what constitutes 'centre' and 'periphery' and the location of theatre or art within that question.

As Jean Baudrillard has pointed out, art has already disappeared as a symbolic pact: 'the capacity of art to negate reality, to set up an 'other scene' in opposition to reality where things obey a higher set of rules, is gone' (Baudrillard, 1994:14). There is now only the possibility of setting up temporary zones of consensus - at least that is, outside of mass media - as Edgar Jager has suggested. If the project of art is to take up the fragmented world and find its living connections not in an attempt to reconstruct ideological monuments - the art object or performance as 'symbolic pact' - then it does so by creating a temporary zone of coherence. Such meeting places or temporary zones are essentially localised, sometimes manifesting within the boundaries of the institutionalised art world, sometimes elsewhere. In this sense a marginal

theatre exists.

This marginal theatre, which partially inherits the aesthetic traditions of experimental theatre, is not predicated on a historicist view of theatre, nor on a regional or geographical view of peripheries or margins but on difference - the presence of different voices and visions - as much within the centre as on the peripheries. It is predicated on questions that have had no precedent within the discipline, on cultural, political and technological perceptions that shift the discussion away from the conventions of the discipline, and locate it in ideas of slippage, of defocussing, of distribution, of refusal or resistance; on a more profound shift of values and attitudes towards visuality, textuality, identity and embodiment - in short on the recognition of difference at all levels.

Heiner Muller noted that 'theatre has to find its zero degree again and again'. If 'theatre' no longer holds as a means of adequately describing or categorising the type of performance work that is proposed by Jan Fabre, BAK-truppen, Rafaello Sanzio, Desperate Optimists and others - it is because 'theatre' as a conventionalised means of seeing is no longer adequate to the conditions of contemporary culture or to the aesthetic explorations that these marginal theatres undertake. This marginal theatre proposes an unresolvable dramaturgy where the conventional terms visual, textual, somatic, perceptual, spatial are not replaced by a set of equivalent terms, but by a reduced and contingent sense of ambience, oscillation, indeterminacy, ephemerality.

On the one hand 'theatre' is shored up by the hollowness of its own conventions, shutting out the world, creating an 'other scene' that ghosts the real, remembrance, repetition, interpretation, no longer a vision of possible worlds for use; on the other hand 'theatre' opens up a landscape, a vision of possible worlds, a zone of temporary coherence. Heiner Müller felt that 'theatre [was] necessary when history is stalled, because it foresees that which is missing; and that which should be aimed towards; whereas revolution has no more need of theatre.'

I am sitting at a table in the Neues Berliner Kunstverein - a gallery in Berlin. Later in the evening the table will become the site of a small performance that I will make for an audience of perhaps.

80 people. I watch the interplay of indifference that takes place at the window. The framed, lit presence of Ulrich Lepka absorbed in his tireless, obsessive observation of the water droplets that fall into a iron dish partly filled with sand from a metal tap placed above the table at which he sits, the precise and graded markings he makes on the paper on the table in front of him. The indifference of the passers-by on the rainy pavement outside the window turning to glance at the figure at the table , the trams that rattle past, faces lit inside by the yellowish glare. A young man passing on the pavement stops to watch. He stands for a while, drawn into the slow rhythms of the work, then raising his hand, he slides open the window and steps through the gap. The sounds and movements of the street rush in.

Earlier we watched Boris Nieslony dressed in a grey suit standing in the gap between a pillar and a wall. A string holding two clothes pegs crosses the gap just above his head. In front of him and to his left, some sheets of glass lean in a stack against the wall. He stands impassively for a while, then turning to a table behind him, he picks a photograph from a box and hangs it from the string in front of his face. The photograph that now replaces his face and head, is the first in a sequence of life-size black and white forensic photographs taken in the early part of the century which show the sometimes mutilated and disfigured faces of victims of violence and disease - men, women, children. In an extraordinarily disturbing and transgressive sequence of variations, the suited male figure behind 'face' animates the persona that appears with hand gestures, or with small objects produced from the pockets of his suit. We witness through the performance an array of our own emotional responses which at every moment attempt to deny themselves, which deeply challenge our cultural assumptions, and open up the 'invisible mechanisms ' of truths and norms like a raw wound. After each action the photograph is torn away from the string and flung on the floor. The suited man leans over and takes a sheet of glass. He takes a pen from his pocket, writes on the glass, then places the glass against the pillar to his right. After the last photograph has been flung on the floor, the suited man picks up the stack of glass and lifting it in front of his face, smashes it with his forehead. He turns and leaves the space. The silence in the gallery extends out into street. Nobody moves. Nothing passes outside.

This moment of speechlessness, of trauma ('the suspension of language, the blocking of meaning' as Barthes puts it) becomes a moment of 'first contact' - a transcultural space witnessed and opened up between the performance, the spectator and their shared environment; a space of humour and violence, a space that relocates performance not in context but as context.

Ecology:

In his discussions of the simultaneous proliferation and disappearance of art, Jean Baudrillard compares art to a currency which may no longer be exchanged: 'it can only float, its only reference itself, impossible to convert into real value or wealth' (Baudrillard, 1994:15). He contrasts the apparent dematerialisation of art (as something of worth) with the materialisation of aesthetics under an operational form. The idea of an ecology of performance is in many ways subject to such a view. Placing ecology in relation to performance does not in my terms seek to rediscover some essentialist view of the place of art in culture or some view of a holistic connectivity between art and nature where the terms 'art' and 'nature' have some value beyond and above the complex interdependencies that make up the worlds we experience.

To come to a definition: I understand 'ecology' as a set of interdependencies between conceptual, social and environmental factors; and I understand 'performance' (as a time-based art) as an unstable element or catalyst operating within an inclusive ecology which enables people to rethink or revision or remediate their relationships to each other and to the interdependent worlds that are constituted by these relations. The term 'inclusive ecology' is based on how the relationships between the elements that constitute an environment are 'in play', as opposed to a 'selective' ecology based on ideas of equilibrium/ balance/ sustainability.

In his recent book Performance: A critical Introduction Marvin Carlson speaks of the popularity of performance as a metaphor or analytical tool. The definition I have just given - performance as an unstable dynamic - refers to the act of performance, the performance object itself as a praxis (a complex of thought and action). Carlson observes that there has been a 'major shift' from the 'what' of culture, to the 'how' of culture which considers '

... how this material is created, valorised , and changed, to how it lives and operates within the culture, by it's actions. Its real meaning is now sought in its praxis, its performance. [....] [This] make[s] it an operation of particular interest at a time of widespread interest in cultural negotiations - how human patterns of activity are reinforced or changed within a culture and how they are adjusted when various different cultures interact. (Carlson, 1997:195)

In other words and in my terms an ecology of performance. Such a praxis moves out of traditional or conventional sites and relationships and sets up temporary sites of exchange and interaction, not only as sources of information, but as sites of formation and transformation - finding ways to alter habitual forms, to expose and question our place in the world, the place of art and performance as aesthetic strategy or as social action. These temporary sites of exchange recognise the 'ecology' of process without the closures often associated with conventional art. This is not just art referencing itself but emphasising the contexts of artwork, and not just its commodity value as object (whether performance object/ sculptural object/ textual object).

The sculptor Robert Morris has written 'Here is the issue stated so long ago by Duchamp: art making has to be based on terms other than those of the arbitrary, formalistic, tasteful arrangement of static forms' This was a plea to let the world in on terms other than image depiction' . We are of course struggling within a material culture where a continual proliferation of 'image depiction' has become the norm. Art increasingly (and predictably in its definition as an unstable catalyst or dynamic) seeks refuge in sites and strategies that resist 'image depiction', concern ing itself increasingly with its 'ecology' in the sense of its interdependencies as a cultural practice. In the light of ecological thinking (the recognition of contextual dependency) performance can no longer be thought of as separate from the environments within which it takes place. There can no longer be any 'empty space', whether black box or white cube, as a neutral, uncontested, transparent, acultural construct).

Theatre is always a complex interaction and negotiation between contexts,between centres and peripheries, between localised and globalised cultures. What for instance is included in or excluded from the cultural agendas operating in the centres - for instance ideas of ecology, of

community, of social effect. What for instance are the aesthetic implictions of a multicultural

context? The curator Maria Lind points to cultural hybridity in the form of 'an arts practice

where local experiences and global outlooks can co-exist and interact, often with a local bias'.

(Lind, 1998:235) As Gerardo Mosquera has indicated

> Art has been [...] marginalised as social communication in a world of mass media (a
> world structured around the centres of power) in order to maximise itself as object
> (commodity) translated into economic value. [...] The value of such an object is not
> intrinsic to its materiality, it is created within a field of relationships.

It is a warm July evening. I am standing in the cool air of an abandoned church , a church which

has lost the community which gave meaning to its function, on land that was once the polder

village of Oosterweel outside Antwerp. The land is now part of an oil refinery owned by

Petrofina . The church is being used as a focal point and café for a festival of site-specific work

organised by De Beweeging. There is a bar, some tables and chairs, the usual literature, a stack

of beer crates where the altar used to stand, people sitting, talking, drinking wine. Jason

Bowman, one of the several artists making performance work for the festival beckons to me. I

follow him through an archway into what may have been a vestry and climb up a curving narrow

stone stairway into the tower of the church. At top of the stairs I can see a pale blue light

glowing through an archway. The source of the blue light that suffuses the space is above me as

I step through the archway into a small square room in the belfry, once occupied by bell-ringers,

now crumbling brick walls, the timber of the uneven floor long since stripped away. I turn to

see a small blue neon sign, a cursive sequence of numbers 21175 slightly flickering

against the dull red brick. The space is quiet and focussed. After some time we both climb down

the stairs and move back into the nave of the church, the murmur of voices, the sound of

glasses.

In this complex work time becomes light. The object refers to its own ephemeral status as

'performance', as artwork . The work opens up the participatory space of the spectator, opens up

the many relationships between the site, its environment, its history, its present use, and the

people (both living and dead) who participate in it. It proposes a basic question: what is the status and location of the art work - of 'theatre'? How is it embedded in the specifics of a context, of a process? The blue neon 'text' refers to the number of regular church candles which would be required to illuminate the church for the amount of years it has already stood and to witness this period of time being burnt. It is a fragile object made by human breath which constructs the formation of history and time. The same human breath which is capable of extinguishing 21175 church candles. For Jason Bowman the work is a function in / of the site. The site is a point where a series of cultural, political and social changes occur which traverse space and time. The process is as important as the product - the moment that the spectator sees the the fragile blue neon is only a part of the total process. The spectator is a witness of a relationship with material culture. The work (in its totality, not just at its moment of becoming 'art object') functions as a way to pass these relationships onto the spectator, who can be a witness of a net of relationships, but can be included in it. The process of developing relationship is a part of the artwork. What is the artwork? The spectator has become it. There are multiple publics, not only the public that sees the work in its material form.(*)

Theatre is no longer the focus of innovation, or radical opposition that it was perhaps twenty years ago; (Raymond Williams was already signalling the demise of the dramatic - or at least its displacement - in the 1970s in 'Drama in a Dramatised Society'). Marianne van Kerkhoeven has noted that ' the power of dreaming seems to be the only power which modern art has at its disposal; the powerlessness, the marginality, the small-scale of theatre/ performance audiences compared to TV - are a fact of the performing arts'. The 'crisis' of the theatre as a means of representation during the 1970-80s was brought about by a wide variety of factors: economic, aesthetic, technological, ideological. The questions of whose theatre, and theatre for whom (with their attendant notions of space, time, ownership, view point etc.) seem to be particularly efficacious in problematising and undermining views of theatre as a fixed and unchanging form. Problems of authority, of hierarchy, of authorship and the discourses around these ideas also put paid to the possibility that theatre could remain a central means of cultural representation - if indeed it has been one at all in the second half of the twentieth century.

We see an increasing localisation of agendas and aesthetic choices. Anatoly Vassiliev stated his position vis-a-vis theatre (1992) as follows:

> During the past few years the process is such that I stopped examining life outside the theatre. I have been concentrating on studying only life in the theatre, life in the artworld. That means I have only been interested in a particular part of life as a whole, as it surrounds the theatre: the life of thoughts and ideas. Not life itself but the state of the ideas in this life. That is a radical change. As a consequence, I locked the doors of my theatre. And the more you close the theatre doors, the more its reminds you of a monastery. Otherwise we couldn't possibly explore either social ideas, or the philosophy or state of art.' (Vassiliev, 1992: 49)

I no longer believe (if I ever did) that such monasticism (the equivalent of Eugenio Barba's 1970s notion of a self-sustaining 'theatre culture') can have much impact outside a localised culture - a culture which is localised not simply in geographic terms but localised within a particular art network. The question arises of what a localised idea of theatre, of performance can do. In some senses our issue of Performance Research 'On Refuge' took up a thematic that opens the question of what are the conditions of work - what kind of refuge is required to produce work, what sense of 'locality' provides the conditions for performance. Vassiliev continues to represent a strand of 'laboratory' (monastic) work in a time when the ordering and cultural identity of such models is widely challenged as elitist, introspective and out of touch. This is not to challenge the theatre that he produces using such a strategy - since the relation between process and product is complex and is never simply a causal one in terms of the impact of the artwork itself. Yet, as always, the direction, or better the diffusion of artwork, of theatre/ performance, is in the best sense unpredictable, in a Cagean sense unimpeded.

The idea of 'ambient theatre' as proposed by Edgar Jager in 'Datum' (1997) provides a very different model where the attempt to find a place to live, a place to present the 'human body' in artificial surroundings, a redefining of values, results not in a reclusivness, but in an ambient theatre idea of creating shelters or temporary zones in which people can meet. This is not the shutting out of the world, the closing of the doors to provide the conditions for artwork, but an

opening up to the world, a world seen a ephemeral - a constant redefinition of what is at stake, the understanding of a fluid language of theatre, a nomadic view where a temporary zone, a temporary shelter can be constructed outside the bastions of the institutions, an aesthetics of the marginal, of the barrio.

I run to get my camera. I have to ask the guard to let me into the room where I have left my case and the material for my performance. It is still quite early in the evening, but darkness falls promptly in the tropics - no temperate seasons here. The single light bulb, powered - as all the houses are here - by tapping into the wiring of a street-light or any other convenient cable , which lights up the inside of Señor Hernandez' one-room house, is now hanging outside the front door, illuminating the front step and the path of gold leaf the width of the doorstep that runs from just inside the threshold out into the street. I have been taking photos of the work on and off since about 4 o'clock and have already finished up my film. Señor Hernandez is insisting on one (one more) final photograph of himself with British artist Sally Tallant standing framed in the door - an image of the Sacred Heart just visible on the back wall. They stand together behind the lightbulb which hangs in the centre of my viewfinder. This photo will never work, even if I had a film. The two hens in their cage on the front step are being fattened for Christmas. They were brought out specially earlier and placed on the whitewashed step. Senor Hernandez had finished painting the front of his house and the step just before the artwork was to commence at four o'clock. The chickens are usually kept inside to stop them being stolen, like all four wheels that used to be on the shell of a battered red Ford Mustang now resting on concrete blocks under the road bridge which shades Senor Hernandez house in the early part of the day. Senor Hernandez is hoping to do up the Mustang one of these days.

Just after four o'clock Señor Hernandez , having observed the beginnings of the work, had disappeared inside his home and some while later reappeared in his best suit. People dress down in Caracas, especially in the barrios. Even though the barrio skirts Caño Amarillo and the old art nouveau presidential palace that lies close to Señor Hernandez home, it is advisable not to look as though you are a person of property: a pair of good shoes, a watch, even a good cotton shirt. Suits are for special occasions. I push the shutter release. A satisfyingly audible click. No,

there was plenty of light. No, it didn't need a flash. It will be fine. We are shaking hands. Senor Hernandez' friends from around the corner have come over. They want us to come and drink with them. We decline. We are drinking with Senor Hernandez who has brought us Polar beers. What is this? Is it gold? Is it real? What's it for? Did you pay for this, Carlos? No, they are artists from abroad. Artists? What does it mean? It's gold - she came and asked if she could paint my doorstep gold. I didn't think it would look as good as this. I'm very happy, very happy. It looks great, Carlos. We would like this too. How long will it stay? A warm winds is blustering under the bridge. Flecks of gold leaf lift off the step and the street. Perhaps it will rain later. The bridge will provide some temporary shelter. One of Senor Hernandez' friends arrives with more beer. Is this art? It looks good - it looks good for Christmas too. Let's go and dance. Yes, later - we have to clear our things. It begins to rain . Señor Hernandez stands in his doorway smiling.

To conclude: I have tried to suggest a theatre of 'experiment' which opens up the aesthetic, cultural, political strategies that it can use and which locates a question at the centre of its work: firstly, a question of context - questioning the conditions of the work, the net of relations that are and have to be brought into play ; and also a question of self-reference - questioning and pushing the boundaries of the work itself in aesthetic terms. Finally, it is difficult to generalise about how theatre should be looked at. As I have suggested, it is dependent on the contexts and locations of the work itself. What is important is firstly the willingness of the spectator to engage their ways of looking noth simply within the conventional modes of theatre representation, within the theatre image, but with the broader dynamics that traverse the location of theatre; and secondly the ability of theatre (in all its levels and phases of production) to open up its own conventions, its means of thinking itself, to include both its processes and its representations within a fluid and transforming practice - setting up a temporary and appropriate shelter, rather than a fixed and unweildy institution.

••••••••

The above is a version of a paper presented at the Helsinki Informal European Theatre Meeting (IETM) Working Group on 'Location & Dislocation of Theatre' convened by Koen Tachelet and Toni Cots (April 24.1999).   (*) I am indebted to Thera Jonker for the use of her notes on Jason Bowman's work in Antwerp.

References:

Allsopp, Ric (1999) 'On Immobility' in Disturbing (the) Image, Frakcija, No. 15, Zagreb: CDU

Allsopp, Ric (et al.) (1997) 'On Refuge' Performance Research Vol.2, No.3 London:
      Routledge

Baudrillard, Jean (1994) 'Transaesthetics' in The Transparency of Evil London: Verso

Carlson, Marvin (1997) Performance: a critical introduction London: Routledge

Jager, Edgar (1997) 'Ambient Theatre/@Temporary/ for the nineties' in Datum Amsterdam: NTI

Jonkers, Thera (1998) 'Interview with Jason Bowman' (unpublished) Antwerpen: DeBeweeging

Lind, Maria (1998) 'Stopping my Process' in Stopping the Process? Helsinki: NIFCA

Mosquera, Gerardo (1995) 'On Art, Politics and the Millennium in Latin America' in Strategies
      Stockholm:

Petersen, Anna Ring (1997) ' The Authority of Invisible Power' in siksi Copenhagen:

Phelan, Peggy (1993) Unmarked: The Politics of Performance London: Routledge

Rogoff, Irit (1998) 'How to Dress for an Exhibition' in Stopping the Process? Helsinki: NIFCA

Vassiliev, Anatoly (1992) 'Theatre as Monastic Community' in Theaterschrift No.2 Brussels:
      Kaaitheater

****

Section 2

Reviews

(1992)

'German Voices'

German Voices

Ric Allsopp

Mary Wigman observed that *'without ecstasy there is no dance'*. For her, to dance meant to manifest the dancer's spirit. The echo of expressionism lay behind Leibliches Theater's (Koln) *Ruach* (a duo choreographed by Eva Schmale) which achieved a depth and complexity of imagery through deceptively simple means. Influenced by Butoh, *Ruach's* intensity and emotional range articulated in direct physical terms the presence and closeness of mortality. The Tibetan Book of the Dead proposes a 'double' or *Bardo* body, an exact duplicate of the human body from which it is separated in the process of death. Duplication and displacement were used extensively as choreographic and metaphoric vehicles. The stage separated into two emotionally intensified areas: a site for the preparation and commemoration of death - a miniature boat, flowers, displaced photographs - and a site of transition, a square of dust-fine sand that was slowly marked by the bodies of the dancers with the traces of mortality. A palpable use of time also delineated the two sites, stretched out towards infinity in the one; measured through the precise and gradual joining of a wooden coffin in the other. The physical displacement of objects that sustain and shelter the living body - hair, clothing, bread, fire - heightened the continual ambiguity of relationships in the piece. These ambiguities were distilled in a beautifully controlled solo danced by Adriana Kocljan - speaking of memory, of sensuality, of the anguish of loss.

The Hebrew word *ruach* means breath, ecstasy, spirit. The presence of 'breath' as an index of vitality, pervaded a collaboration between the German saxophonist Peter Brotzmann and Mike Pearson (Brith Gof) entitled *The Bound Man* , improvisations inspired by the expressionist Austrian writer Ilse Aichinger. The imagery explored the extremes of physical experience with a sensibility that was the antithesis of Leibliches Theater.

An aesthetic of survival was central both to the collaboration and to the piece itself; a desire to reach an extremity of immediate experience, both as performer and ... as what? It was unclear where the boundaries of the fictional were to be drawn. The sheer physical intensity of *The Bound Man* caused the imagery to collapse, the fabric to tear apart. Whilst Brotzmann's playing had an inescapable immediacy and power, Pearson's performance did not quite sustain the imagery he attempted to invoke. Perhaps this play with the engagement of the audience was intentional; perhaps what I perceived to be its predictable direction was an attempt to force us to experience the anguish of survival. So much of contemporary experience is mediated or vicarious, that it has becomes difficult to know *how* to react to such immediacy. The voices that we hear end up speaking to themselves, looped in, unable any longer to attract us.

Two men whose bodies in different ways were 'in extremis' - one found lying bounding an arid landscape of corroded metal; the other a moving source of incredible and sometimes brutal sound energy. The fragmentary narrative of *The Bound Man* unfolded through Brotzmann's playing, finding extraordinary transitions between the visceral and the lyrical; ripped sheets of multiphonic sound, rustling insects, melodic fragments; and through Mike Pearson's anguished physical struggle against humiliation and degradation. For all its shortcomings as a piece, the collaboration remains important for the rapport and virtuosity of the performers and as one of the rare opportunities to see an area of music-performance work which has an enthusiastic following on the continent.

These two raids on the inexpressible found parallells in the expanded photographic work of *Living Spaces*, an exhibition by four artists from Stuttgart. The title suggests spaces that enclose and sustain human life. It is ironic and, like the displacement of Ruach, or the landscape of *The Bound Man*, demands that the spectator re-think the means of representation.

In Ulrich Bernhardt's Ironwork I-IV, a series of multiple exposures mounted on sheet steel, the image questions the status of elemental presence both as representation and as the 'thing itself'. An attempt is made to solidify images, to perform an alchemical operation on material and the

117

images that are inscribed on it. The surface as screen - that both conceals and reveals - is

supplanted by the idea that nothing lies beneath or behind. The screen is either off or on; tuned

or untuned. Reception is altered by interference. Valentin Wormbs' The *Video Cleaner* provided a

wry solution to the problems of bad reception and some welcome moments of humour in an

otherwise oblique and serious exhibition.

+++++++

(1994)

'A House with Wings?'

Notes, No.9 Nederlands Theater Institute

Amsterdam: NTI, pp. 20 -23

A HOUSE WITH WINGS?

Ric Allsopp

Amsterdam is the one of the few European cities that has retained the marks and traces of the 'Sixties as an indelible part of its present character. The ambience of the parks, the pervading sense of 'laissez-faire', the liberal attitudes towards drugs, sex and sexuality, the social provision are inconceivable without reference to the social and cultural 'revolutions' of the 'Sixties. It is perhaps not surprising that Amsterdam should have provided both a spiritual and material home for the School for New Dance Development (SNDD) since the early Seventies.

The SNDD, a faculty of the Theatre School of the Amsterdamse Hogeschool voor de Kunsten, grew out of a school started by Dutch dancer/ choreographer Pauline de Groot in the late 'Sixties on her return to Holland from the United States where she had studied with Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham and Eric Hawkins. Her school introduced ideas about dance, movement and the body, reflecting a new aesthetic that was shifting away from an emphasis on the individual, coherent and extended body of traditional dance, to the collaborative, discontinuous and active body of new performance. The SNDD became a school working within such an essentially post-modern collaborative aesthetic. The roots can be traced to the generative work of Cage, Cunningham, Rauschenberg and other artists working at Black Mountain College (North Carolina) in the early 1950's and more directly to the Judson Dance Theatre of the early 1960's members of which the SNDD still maintains working links with. Throughout its history it has remained implicitly committed to an exploration of the live and moving body as proposed by artists such as Steve Paxton, Deborah Hay & Simone Forti, and more recently in the Body-Mind Centering work of Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen; an exploration which has effectively 'removed the body from the gaze by returning it to activity, to the condition of always doing something' (1)

Almost 20 years after its beginnings the SNDD remains a relatively small-scale school run by two female directors (Trude Cone & Ria Higler) and distinguished by its international perspective

and its multicultural body of students, teachers, dance artists and makers who 'come together to study, share ideas and make performances' in the area of new dance. Its perspective on new dance is still largely influenced by its American heritage, though this too is beginning to shift.

In SNDD terms 'new dance' is a contemporary project of exploration and experimentation which has determined not to work strictly within established aesthetic forms, but to use and develop these forms in relationship to other means of mind/ body experience. New dance utilises specialist techniques and alternative views of the body which draw on intercultural and interdisciplinary information as a means of communication and expression. It does not seek to establish a new physical style, but to find and develop movement forms which are appropriate to diverse cultural contexts. Likewise the SNDD view of the dance artist and maker places their work within a wide field of contexts and no longer exclusively within the 'aesthetic' space of studio or theatre. The 'artist' is seen as non-specialist in an increasingly specialised world, whose role is not prescribed - that is not necessarily working towards existing 'dance' markets - but responsive/ responsible to contexts within which work is placed.

Central to SNDD thinking in the last few years is the integration of the body/ mind. The School's work "draws on a history of continuing research into the perception and use of the body/ mind as a medium for action, design, communication, analysis and criticism in dance. This view of performance and dance has been developing over the course of this century, as choreographers and dancers in Europe and America have initiated new movement languages and forms, as well as contexts in which their performances have taken place, confronting and breaking with established forms and attitudes". What is noticeable in this prospective statement is the inclusion of 'context'. The exploration of integrated body/ mind, 'focused on an interaction with the origins of movement and the development of an ability to give form to ideas' has had a tendency, despite the underlying aesthetic of collaboration, towards the self-reflective studio work often associated with new dance. The recognition of 'context' - that is the recognition that the body/ mind cannot be separated from its particular context, and is [in part] constructed by that context, has provided an interesting dynamic within the school and a dynamic which speaks to the shifted and shifting contexts of the 1990's. Performance making of necessity includes

121

contexts, histories and location as an essential part of its considerations. Performances originate in relation to other performances, other practices; performances imply the inclusion or exclusion of the 'other' - body, object, space, attitude; performances 'take place'. Performance and its making is complex - the intersection of many differing types of information, intention and action. Any means of providing a clearer integration of 'thinking and doing' is desirable. A 'network' approach for example, selects one topic in a given area as a focus for study and explores it from a number of associated perspectives. Areas share materials, techniques cross-over - a network of information (practical, conceptual) that informs performance making begins to emerge. As opposed to a 'traditional' linear and progressive approach which tends to form reactive ideas of performance (building in reaction to established forms) - a network tends to foster an 'originary" approach - finding the impulse for and necessities of, performance rather than rebuilding on discarded aesthetic forms.

What is it then that makes the small-scale, idiosyncratic and marginal institution (for example, Black Mountain College, Dartington College, the SNDD) a place where ways of creative thinking and practice can grow and have an impact on the wider field of performance? It is often the unreconcilable tension between two positions, contexts or structures that provide the key to creativity. The continuing influence and international reputation of the SNDD as a 'laboratory' for the development of practice and thinking in new dance, may well be ascribed to such tensions. Firstly, the tension between essentialist views of the body and identity - the idea of the natural, authentic, coherent, consistent and integrated body; and the constructionist view of the body and identity as a process of constant refashioning determined by contexts of gender, class, ethnicity, ability. There is also an interesting tension between creative work and the institutional structures that surround it and support it (or in some cases stifle it).

For reasons of scale the SNDD has been able to make very good use of the relationship between the inevitable vertical management structures required of institutions and the horizontal structures implied by the dominant collaborative aesthetic of the school. This operates creatively in apparently mundane, but vital areas. Food is literally at the centre of the school. It is great food and eaten by students and teachers alike, and in various ways its preparation and

distribution is contributed to by both students and teachers. The secretariat take classes, attend

performances, provide feed-back. The students clean the building, run the bar and so forth. The

recognition here is that different forms of operational structure, whilst necessary, facilitate

creativity when they are regarded as flexible and accommodating and not as impositions. The

'Sixties dictum that the processes of life are equal to the processes of art holds. This 'organic'

approach to running an institution [whose purpose is finally to enable specific and transferable

creativity] observes that the processes of art itself provide an adequate model that enables the

institution to operate effectively. The imposition of economic and managerial models that

regard arts education as simply another product to be managed seldom achieves much in the

facilitation of creativity.

The SNDD had its beginnings in a period that had begun to question the orthodoxies of unified

psychological character and narrative in theatre. The dance world, and the field of 'fine art'

performance, has of course, remained always on the edge of such concerns, but it is interesting

to see how the marginal exploration of the moving body, improvisatory structures, problems of

figure, persona and representation has become increasingly central to the broader concerns of

performance in the 1980's-90's. The SNDD has effectively spent the last decade mapping and

charting an 'invisible history of the body' (2) -the history of flesh and blood, the territories of

'after language' (the exploration of aspects of bodily experience that defy de-construction in

terms of the 'scripted body') - often in an atmosphere of little interest except from the specialist

few and in ways that continue to be regarded by establishment institutions as at best

idiosyncratic and at worst unacceptable. It is often the commitment to a vision , even if it makes

no apparent or immediate sense in terms of conventional ideas of aesthetics or structures, that

in the end pays off.

Earlier this year (August 1994), in association with Writing Research Associates, the SNDD

staged 'The Connected Body?' a series of five workshops and a conference, which brought

together diverse disciplines (particularly 'fine art' performance and new dance performance) to

explore the creative tensions that underlie essentialist and constructionist approaches to the

body's representations in contemporary 'live art' and performance. The project was sub-titled 'a

site for re-integration'. This re-integration concerns itself with allowing opposing and often

contradictory tensions to co-exist creatively. The SNDD building, which has been such an

important part of its identity, provided a 'sanctuary' which both contained and gave freedom to

a diverse range of performance, presentation and discussion. It aimed to respond to a

continuing need for intelligent thought and practice concerning the body; and to respond to a

detectable desire, particularly in some areas of arts practice and scholarship, for a move towards

a 'new authenticity' that can accept notions of the body's essential experience and constitution as

well as its fragmentary and constructed nature. In the planning of this project, it seemed that

the SNDD would provide not only the appropriate type of flexible structure to work with, but

also a literal site where creative and conceptual tensions could be explored.

An example of such re-integration came from an 'actuation' or demonstration that Ulster-based

performance artist Alastair MacLennan made at the end of the five-day workshop period. With a

clear reference to the didactic work of Joseph Beuys, he took a folding blackboard, laid it on the

floor and, having cleaned it, proceeded to paint one half of it black. Once this was completed,

he took four silver spoons, each containing a small piece of chalk surrounded by water and

placed them at the four corners of the blackboard. Finally he placed two spoons each containing

a piece of chalk surrounded by milk at each end of the central fold of the blackboard. This

simple and highly allusive demonstration holds in a resonant performance image both the

problems and solutions inherent in the re-integration of conflicting positions.

The 'Sixties are often represented as an arcadian experience, a nostalgic utopian dream, a time

when it was indeed possible to 'get back to nature', to 'find one's self'. Like the heritage culture

into which, it would seem, our more acceptable histories are absorbed and sanitised, the 'Sixties

have become identified with those images that can be reproduced and marketed for easy

consumption. They have become one amongst a plethora of possible 'life-styles choices' to be

made in pursuit of cultural, individual and virtual identities. The 'Sixties' of the 1990's are a

simulation cut out of history, devoid of context and pasted onto the glowing, fluid surface of

the present. 'All that is solid melts into air; all that is holy is profaned ...' (3) and we are again

forced to face the increasing undecidability of our social, cultural and aesthetic identities. What

remains important about the 'Sixties as a conceptual, aesthetic and practical source for contemporary performance work, is a sense of the historical 'seeding' of ideas/ images that occurred at that time and that begin to have an effect over much longer periods and in contexts that would have been difficult to imagine in the 'Sixties.

There are moments when any creative institution might be imagined as 'a house with wings' (4) - as an image of both the 'art work' and the catalyst that brings the 'art work' into being. This image can also embrace both essentialist and constructionist perspectives; in other words it enables us to imagine art as transcendent, emanating from the other and speaking universal truths - a winged house that descends to us, that is brought to us - as well as the image of a house that is immanent and built from a particular context, by a particular people, that becomes a collaborative vision and takes flight.

++++++++

Notes:

(1) Henry M. Sayre (1989) The Object of Performance, Chicago: University of Chicago Press

(2) Roy Porter 'The History of the Body' in New Perspectives on Historical Writing, ed. Peter
Burke, Cambridge: Polity Press

(3) Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels The Rise of Bourgeois Rule

(4) I am indebted to Cyrus Seif of the Theatre Faculty (Utrecht Hogeshool voor de Kunsten) for this image and an interesting difference of position .

Ric Allsopp is a founding partner of Writing Research Associates and a freelance writer, lecturer and performance maker. He has been a visiting teacher at the SNDD since 1991 and is at present a Research Fellow at DartingtonCollege of Arts, UK.

(1994)

'The Zwillinge Project: Episode 7'

In

Zwillinge Project, ed. Kirsten Lavers

Cambridge: Object Books (1998), pp.33-34

The Zwillinge Project: Episode 7:

Upstairs, Gloucestershire - July 16, 1994

Ric Allsopp

More than anything else the day raised questions about the nature of the art work - not a question of art, but a question of what are the conditions and processes of art, the work of art: what is brought into view, what is drawn to the attention of the viewer, what materials are placed against or with each other, where are the borders, edges and closures of the work? The site itself - Prema Arts Centre, a former place of prayer - is significant as the focus of the work; an architectural space that literally provides a transforming focal point - the nine windows of the upstairs room framing the passage of light inside the room from dawn to dusk, a journey mapped by the artists every fifteen minutes onto the floor - a light and reflective room that also frames the nine half hour episodes of the piece.

The work draws our attention to what is or is becoming absent, to what is referred to - through the prayer, the votive offering, the wish-lists, the previous episodes of the Zwillinge collaboration, the drawings of the artist's model (which in itself indicates the complex set of references outwards, where no relationship is entirely as transparent and immediate as it seems at first sight).

But it is not just the formal elements of the work that fascinate - the envelopes, the windows, the poses of the Life Model , the map of light, and so on that operate like the *topoi* or places of a complex memory-system (a system for who to remember what?) that holds in a spatial

relation our hopes, fears, and expressions - but the informal aspects of the piece that fascinate as well.

The day is hot. Cream teas are being served on the lawns below the upstairs room, a quintessentially English expression which always seems (in memory) to accompany cultural events and links sport, landscape, art, and horticulture in an activity whose rules are reassuringly familiar. The signs of 'art' - the artist's model, (the artist as model - for where else is the artist in this work?) the easels and charcoal, the steady stream of drawings that emerge from the hands of the (other) artists who respond to the gradually shifting light in the room, to the subdued methodical actions of the Life Model and her Life Class Organiser - all point to the familiar: the work of art. But the familiar is not enough for some of those who drink tea on the lawns below, where murmurings of incomprehension, of not- knowing-what-to-say, or how to react, are too quickly lost in the warmth and balminess of a summer's afternoon. For how many really care to open up to the more complex and disturbing elements of what is occurring upstairs - the gradual trail that follows the fading light, the remains of the day, the traces of vision, the scored and recorded body of the Life-Model, the chest-freezers standing sentinel on ether side of the inner stair, the envelopes that doubly ring the walls of the room above the nine windows, the wish-lists frozen in bags of water, the stones and broken panes of glass that litter the floor?

The wooden fire escape that lead upstairs has a text burnt into its steps: 'I have this awful habit of assuming that everyone is like me, and must like me have the same hopes, dreams and desires, but they are too afraid to admit to them'. The inscription is taken from a letter to the Zwillinge Project from Bill Stevens of Hull who for the last ten years has been keeping a list of all the things that he would like to achieve or experience during his lifetime. He keeps this list on top of his wardrobe and until this performance nobody, not even his wife, knew about it.

++++++

(1997)

Archive Reviews:

'Montevideo / Timebased Arts, Amsterdam'

&

'Deutsches Tanzarchiv, Köln'

Archive Reviews

Ric Allsopp

1.   MonteVideo/ Time Based Arts

      Netherlands Institute for Media Art, Amsterdam

Video Ergo Sum:

Visitors to MonteVideo/ Time Based Arts, located near the centre of Amsterdam at the top of Spuistraat , may notice a naked and unblinking eye on a video monitor which hangs in the office window to the right of the entrance. Observant visitors will also notice that the eye is observing them, following them and moving with them as they move past the window towards the entrance. The quality of interactive viewing that is implied and invoked in I/Eye (as Bill Spinhoven's (1993) video installation is called) becomes an index for looking at the work contained in the media-art archives at MonteVideo. Housed with the Gallery René Coelho, MonteVideo has in the past few years become one of the most important archives of media-art in Europe - to name but one aspect of its many activities.

Originally founded in 1978 by René Coelho as a gallery for video art and the promotion of video and television as media for artistic expression, MonteVideo merged with Time Based Arts (founded in1983 as an initiative of the Dutch Association of Media Artists) and moved into its present building in early 1994. MonteVideo's activities, based on a philosophy of support for all aspects of media art, are divided into three branches: production and post-production facilities enabling artists to produce work; distribution and presentation enabling artists to show and disseminate work; and research and development support for artists (since 1994) in the form of a 'visual arts laboratory'. The archive collections that MonteVideo now houses reflect both the results and the resources of this philosophy of support, and alongside MonteVideo's extensive in-house activities and collaborative touring exhibitions, provide an increasingly important active historical base for work in the field of media art.

By 1994 Montevideo had already built up a substantial collection of work from leading video artists. The merger with Time Based Arts (TBA) brought a further collection of work and the collection as a whole is now broadly divided into a conservation archive and a distribution archive. The conservation archive supervised by Montevideo includes media-art collections from the Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, the Groninger Museum and Museum Boysmans-van Beuningen. The distribution archives are built up from the collections of the Lijnbaumcentrum, Rotterdam (1970-82), De Appel Foundation (1975-1983), Time Based Arts (1983-1993) and Montevideo (1978 - present). The former collections have been rounded off and the active MonteVideo/ TBA collection is now growing by some twenty tapes per year. Not all the material in the collections is yet available for presentation, but MonteVideo is currently making new screening copies of all the tape works in the collections. At the same time the conservation project is preserving material that was originally shot on old and now no longer playable, formats and systems.

The Lijnbaancentrum Collection and De Appel Collection ('born on the eve of performance and body art, De Appel [...] became the embodiment and international nerve centre of this new development within the fine arts') include important work by Abramovic and Ulay, Vito Acconci, Christian Boltanski, Chris Burden, Jim Dine, Valie Export, Nancy Holt, Dennis Oppenheim, Joan Jonas, Allan Kaprow, Alison Knowles, Gine Pane, Nigel Rolfe to mention but a few. The Time Based Arts Collection comprises about 400 video tapes by international artists covering the period from 1983-93. These include work by Abramovic/ Ulay, General Idea, Dan Graham, Nan Hoover, Ulricke Rosenbach, Lydia Schouten and Lawrence Weiner. The Montevideo/ TBA Collection includes some 800 tapes from Dutch and foreign artists covering the period from 1974- present. The Catalogue notes that 'Typical of these works is their autonomous character [...] the video tapes are the artists' end products. These are not tapes on art and artists'(1996: 125) The collection includes work by

Peter Bogers, Livinus van der Bundt, Juan Downey, Gary Hill, Merel Mirage, Marten Spanjaard, Fiona Tan, Steina and Woody Vasulka and Bill Viola. Apart from these collections, there is also an extensive selection of documentary tapes on artists, exhibitions and tapes from artists in the library.

The MonteVideo archive also houses about fifty artist's installations (which are also documented on tape). The work is primarily by Dutch artists and parts of the collection display a certain Netherlandish delight in sophisticated invention, the electronic and/or cybernetic equivalent of the 'cabinet of curiosities; for example Kees Aafjes 1991 <u>Please, Close Tap after Use</u> where physical and simulated reality have been interlaced and

> for a moment or two, you find your self experiencing the phenomen[on] of running water as if for the first time, and you turn the tap on and off a few times to see if what is happening really is true. Kess Aafjes designed a jokey little kitchen sink with a tap. When you turn on the tap ... water runs into the sink. But what you really see and hear, however, is a recording of running water: the bottom of the sink is a computer screen (virtual/ simulated reality!)' (MonteVideo, 1996: 303)

Or, continuing the delight in 'living objects', Maarten Spanjaard's 1992 <u>Adelbrecht:</u>

> <u>Adelbrecht</u> is a ball, no more and no less than that. [However] Adelbrecht is a skilled [and] gifted ball: he is, in fact, able to act entirely independently. The ball Adelbrecht rolls about under his steam, as it were; what's more, he speaks in the English of a Dutchman. Introducing himself with the words: 'Hi, I'm Adelbrecht. and he has much more to impart. He also responds to touch, and if it is gentle he voices his pleasure, but if you handle him roughly, he'll soon let you know he is not amused. A strange experience, a thing that comments on your behaviour ... an object with attitude! _ <u>Adelbrecht</u> is driven by a motor and is equipped with sensors and a small computer. (1996: 360)

Or more convential video installations such a Steina Vasulka's <u>Pyroglyphs</u> 'built up from twelve monitors forming a circle on the floor. The room in which the circle stands is dark. The only light beams from the monitors, which present images and sounds from a forge. The images glow with fire and sparks.' (1996:377).

MonteVideo's special video publications include <u>The Collected Works of Marina Abramovic &</u> <u>Ulay</u> (in three volumes); a series of compilation Arttapes (1& 2) and three Chill-Out Classics by

Gerald van der Kaap, with sound by Leo Anamaet - video's with 'a mind of their own [which] are an invitation into the unknown world of the senses giving you access to the new techno transcendence'. MonteVideo has produced an excellent descriptive Catalogue (1996) of the collections based on their database of artists and artist's work. They have also recently completed a comprehensive on-line relational database (called WatsOn) of the distribution collection which can be searched by genre, themes and keywords. The Catalogue will soon be available as a CD-ROM which 'will contain not only sounds and images of the various works described in [the] catalogue' , but further information on the MonteVideo/TBA library, and artist's biographical data .

As its founder René Coelho hoped in 1978, the MonteVideo collection has indeed become a primary resource which allows researchers, artists and interested individuals a means of participating in a different kind of looking, of engaging with a history of media-art works which do not easily fit within the norms of television culture.

Information:

MonteVideo/ TBA, Spuistraat 104 a

1012 VA Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

tel. 0031 20 623 7101 fax. 0031 20 624 4423

email. art@montevideo.xs4all.nl

website. http://www.dds.nl/~mvideo

The Archive is open by appointment for viewings by individual researchers and small groups.

References:

Coelho, René et al. (eds) (1996) MonteVideo/ TBA Catalogue Amsterdam: NIMA

++++++++

2.   Deutsches Tanzarchiv Köln.

Moveo Ergo Sum:

It would seem that 'collections' and archives are often built on the back of the insistent vision of
a singleminded individual, and, whether they remain simply collections or become working
archives is often also a matter of how that originating individual saw their reasons for starting
to collect documentation and resources. In the case of the Deutches Tanzarchiv Köln, the
collection was seen from its postwar beginnings in 1948 - (the original Deutsches Tanzarchiv in
Berlin was burned to the ground as a result of an air strike in 1943) - as a resource for dancers
equally as vital as the body itself. Kurt Peters, dancer, dancer teacher and later critic, whose
energy and means built up the present collection, encouraged students to spend time outside
their studio work reading and researching the histories and techniques of dance. Kurt Peters'
interest in all forms of dance and movement from acrobatics to butoh, from ballet to contact
improvisation, has resulted in a very wide ranging collection of books, periodicals and newspaper
cuttings, all methodically, if at times idiosyncratically catalogued.

The Library contains over 8000 books and 85 current periodicals on all aspects of dance and
movement. The collection's main focus is German Expressionist dance from the 1920s and 1930s
reflected in the one hundred or so estate collections and private papers of German dancers,
choreographers and dance critics including those of Harald Kreutzberg, Dore Hoyer - the most
important German soloist in modern dance from the 1930s to 1960s continuing the expressionist
tradition established by Mary Wigman - and Max Niehaus. The Archive holds c. 80,000
photographs including work by Siegfreid Enkelmann and Dietmar Dünhöft. In addition the
Databank includes information on the life and work of 250 German and international dance
artists. The Tanzarchiv has published work on Valeska Gert, Dora Hoyer, Harald Kreutzberg and
Kurt Jooss.

The Tanzarchiv was taken over in 1985 by the City of Cologne Saving Bank Cultural Foundation.
It has developed into perhaps the most significant public dance archive in Europe maintaining a
highly visible programme of exhibitions, publications and video screenings. Since 1994 the

Internet has enabled the Archiv to make its collections available on-line through a well-designed
website*and to make links with the New York Public Library Dance collection amongst others. It
also provides the medium for Tanzwissenschaft, a new electronic journal for German dance
scholarship initiated by Frank-Manuel Peter in early 1996.

Archives and collections invariably have historical oddities as well as items of particular note.
The masks from Mary Wigman's 1926 'Totentanz' lie casually next to a death-cast (by Fritz
Cremer 1932) of the dancer Vera Skoronel's delicate hand in a small glass cabinet, as if waiting at
any moment to be reanimated. Seventeenth and eighteenth century French and Italian dancing
manuals as well as the voice 'contre-la-danse' of the puritan backlash are to be found with Oscar
Schlemmer's handwritten notes for the 'Triadic Ballet' first staged at the Stuttgart Landestheater
in 1922. The tension between the ephemerality of dance and the possible artifacts and traces it
might leave and upon which it reconstructs itself is noted by the present Director, Frank-Manuel
Peter:

> All art forms are dependent on renewal. Each new development, every avantgarde, bases
> itself in someway on previous traditions and avantgardes. Likewise each artist's practice
> depends on a detailed study of work that existed before it. The art of dance is no
> different in this respect; except that its transitory and fleeting character makes it perhaps
> the most difficultof all arts to document. An archive is a means of recollecting the art of
> dance, of holding the memory of dance together.

This sense of the inseparability of the moment of dance and the histories that have shaped it is
still manifest in the the Archive's obvious commitment to making the collection both active and
accessible to a wide public, a policy that has now take n the Archive out of its present
overcrowded premises to a new specially designed building in Cologne's recently completed
Media Park. The new building will enable the Dance Archive to present its significant collection
of engravings, paintings, sculptures, costumes, masks and stage designs for the first time in
continuous exhibition; and will place the Archive alongside the Mary Wigman Archive, and the
'Public Presence Videothèque' - the Referat für Videotanz. This latter is the collection associated
with the Dance and Media Project, established in 1994 to support and disseminate the 'new art

from' of videodance. The unique collection of over seven hundred contributions emphasises camera choreographies and new performance for film/ video as well as the documentation of dance performance. The Project sponsors creative work , initiates conferences and presents a quarterly dance film programme 'Dance Tales' at the Museum Ludwig in Cologne.

The Deutsches Tanzarchiv Köln is a tangible and accessible demonstration of how the links between practical and theoretical research that informed Kurt Peters' collection, have benefitted dance scholarship and have helped enable an active and dynamic dance culture around Cologne that is firmly linked to international developments in dance.

Information:

Deutsches Tanzarchiv Köln

Im MediaPark 7, 50670 Köln, Germany.

tel. 0049 221 226 5757   fax. 0049 221 226 5758

email. tanzarchiv@aol.com

The Dance Archive is open Tuesday - Thursday 10-16 hrs by appointment. * The Tanzarchiv on-line is a part of the Stiftung Kulture Foundation webite: http://www.sk-kultur.de

++++++++

(1998)

Archive Review

'The Archive as Event - Die Schwarze Lade'

Archive Review

Ric Allsopp

The Archive as Event:

> The Black Kit/ Die Schwarze Lade
>
> ASA-European
>
> Art Service Association, Köln

'A maximum of mental sources and information in exchange with a minimum of materialisation.
A basic sense of new definition in performance art and the first step in preparing a network as a
physical and mental form' . So starts the information on 'The Black Kit' - an archive of ASA and
its (former) parallel association Black Market International. Elsewhere in the literature and
documentation that surrounds the (net)work of ASA-European - the Art Service Association
centred on Köln, inspired and given direction by performance artist Boris Nieslony - it states
that ASA 'is not an art project'. Instead, it 'puts values into transfer' and in this way
'communication has a precise effect on all cultural activities, including art'.The place of a
material archive in such a fluid and conceptual network is summarised by a further statement:

> ASA is a communications pool into which energy, materials and information are
> constantly being fed. It is impossible to receive anything directly from this pool, to draw
> anything out or to expect anything from it. Nonlinearly and non determinable by ASA,
> free floating forms materialise in unexpected places, for which ASA now sets the required
> framework. Within these boundaries free floating forms take shape. They consist of
> information, ideas and matter and they solidify into wares, projects or events and form
> meaningful relationships. Thereafter, these materializations disappear once more into the
> pool, 'ASA'. (ASA, 1997)

The image of a fluid 'communications' pool which aptly characterises the work that Boris

138

Nieslony tirelessly continues to initiate, remains in some senses utopian. Such fluidity coagulates, gradually forming into the weights and measures of history - the archive becomes a material point of focus , of memory - and in this case literally becomes a growing but still movable 'kit' (see photo) where information and resources on a wide range performance artists can become organised and catalogued. The material fact of the archive now becomes a focus for the 'development of a centre for studies, education and information' - always a precarious balance between the openness of arts action and fixities of the academy.

Only art gives us the possibility to say something that we don't know' claimed the satirist Gabriel Laub. We also work with art as a medium of expression. But, since we have a particular tool at our disposal, we can say without being insolent: 'Art gives us the possibility to say something that we know'. And as this knowledge in its peculiarity compounds of several charitable components, we like to make this knowledge available to (for) anybody interested. The Black Kit is primarily an important tool for educational work, research and documentation focussing on performance art, project art and artist-run spaces. (ASA, 1997)

The idea for The Black Kit originated in 1981 at a project in Stuttgart for seventy invited artists working in performance, performance art, installation, painting and video, called The Council (Das Konzil).The project, initiated by Boris Nieslony , sought to extend and develop areas of interactive communication. The participants did not wish to catalogue the proceedings of The Council but proposed instead a transportable container which could be taken from event to event, from meeting to meeting. The Black Kit was envisaged as a generator of thoughts, as an archive and as a sculpture of public interest.

Exhibition spaces are turned into a public library offering to anyone the power of the ideas documented here. Not just an invitation for the viewer to consume, but an invitation for thoughtful studies of letters, photos, poems, videotapes, objects, relicts and records of open work-situations. Moreover it includes the opportunity for debate about the topics and offerings experienced. (Jürgen Raap, Kunstforum 95, 1988)

The Black Kit has been presented several times within the framework of exhibitions from 1988

onwards. This means of presenting the 'archive as event' not only signifies the literal display of selected parts of the stock but also the active and interactive realisation of certain areas of the archive and their implications.

The Black Kit contains documentation since 1975 of the most important international projects with communicative structures related to performance. There are documentations of artists self-help organisations, artist-run spaces, conferences, seminars and interactive projects. Since 1981 the archive has collected and structured documents of both realised and unrealised projects. The archive has become an organism, a permanently growing account of ideas. Including documentation in a wide range of media, the archive is structured with an index that provides the possibility of searching through thematic and conceptual links and connections, keywords, fields/ domains, and networks. At present The Black Kit includes documentation, dates and information on more than one thousand artists; over one hundred video-documents of performance events in Europe, Asia, and North America; plus numerous slides, records and audiotapes; more than five hundred journals/ magazines, periodicals, catalogues and brochures concerned with the practice and theory of performance art. The archive catalogue is also available on-line.

ASA-European publishes an annual performance reader 'Slaps - Banks - Plots' . At present there are two readers based on ASA- initiated performance conferences (1997 and 1998) which contain a wide range of contemporary writings and statements by artists. The readers are available on disc direct from ASA (for DM 20,-) and also on-line. The ASA website itself has many interesting links to ASA's network activities and to other performance related archives including Performance Index (see following review). The CH [Swiss] Performance Netzwerk will host The Black Kit with Boris Nieslony at Pfäffikon on 28 -29 February 1999.

INFORMATION:

ASA-European e.V., Rathenauplatz 35, D-50674 Köln

email: asabank@dom.de

tel. 0049 (0) 221 245115; fax: 0049 (0) 221 240 4422

The most immediate means of accessing events, information and projects that comprise the ASA

networks is via the World Wide Web: http:www.asa.de

Further information concerning ASA-European and The Black Kit archive is available via:

http://www.asa.de/ASA/index.htm

Information on recent and forthcoming events and projects is available via:

http://www.asa.de/ASA/NewsFrame.htm

+++++++

(2000)

'Tempest(s)'

in The Tempest and Its Travels, ed. P.Hulme & W.Sherman

London: Reaktion Books, pp. 162 -167

Tempest(s)

Terra Nova Theatre Institute, Copenhagen

Ric Allsopp

In our memories a fictitious past has already taken the place of the other one, of which we know nothing with any certainty - not even that it is false. [Jorge Luis Borges (1947), in 'Tlön, Uqbar & Orbis Tertius')

One by one the audience is brought down a steep metal staircase into a large dimly lit industrial space. A man sits alone at a bare table in the centre of the space, facing the staircase, a pencil in front of him. On a wall behind him a large looped video projection shows documentary footage: a coastline thronged with people, an overcrowded ship departing. Individual figures separate themselves from the audience and approach the table. On a side wall another looped projection shows the identity papers and photographs of each figure. The man does not speak. A small gesture - a nod of the head, a movement of the pencil - either sends them through or back into the crowd. Those who pass through stand in line against the projection of the ship. For the displaced arrival and departure are one and the same.

Tempest(s) was staged in Copenhagen in the spring of 1999 as part a five-year cultural and arts development plan initiated in Denmark in 1997 by Terra Nova Theatre Institute. The dramaturgy of *Tempest(s)* sought to examine relationships between the framework of an aesthetic model (Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and its themes of cultural meetings and confrontations); contemporary urban multicultural and intercultural social experience; and the placing of contemporary artwork as a cultural catalyst in such contexts. The social models of a monocultural society and the aesthetics of a traditional illusionist theatre or performance 'object' no longer easily reflect the cultural and social realities that typify contemporary urban experience. This is not to say that 'traditional' cultural expressions no longer have a place. Shakespeare's *Tempest* opened issues of cultural confrontation and of illusion as a power structure within the world that Shakespeare was writing in at the end of the Renaissance. The

dramaturgy of *Tempest(s)* sought to translate these issues into our own contemporary terms.

Seeking cultural analogues in the themes and imagery of Shakespeare's text, *Tempest(s)* imagines a contemporary Caliban, displaced from his now 'uninhabited', or recently decolonised island, negotiating the borders and cultures of 'Fortress Europe' - the former colonial 'heartland' or 'homeland'. In trying to find a place for himself within a world that is at once both alien and familiar, Caliban discovers that his attempts to negotiate identity and values on his own terms are still shaped by Prospero's 'art'. Prospero's means of maintaining power and control over his enemies, over Caliban and Ariel, and over his daughter Miranda, are imagined as projections - the 'virtual', mediating and invisible power structures that pervade social and political life in Europe, that regulate its geographical and cultural borders. This virtual world of projections is contrasted with the actualities and pressures of a localised everyday world , in particular as seen through the experience of immigrants and refugees. Within this 'brave new world' Caliban rediscovers the difficulties of making a place for himself and the impossibility of a return in any sense to the island home from which he came.

The reality of the situation that *Tempest(s)* imagines does not only confront immigrants or refugees attempting to find security or asylum in contemporary Europe. Our individual perspectives on questions of gender, class, race, and sexuality are also contested areas of social and cultural negotiation. Our experiences of displacement, insecurity, mobility, and difference are framed within increasingly globalized cultural images of security, prosperity, identity and idealised or normalised behaviours. It is this tension that sustains the displaced and displacing conditions of contemporary life, provides the ideas and relationships upon which the performance of *Tempest(s)* was built and gives the dramaturgy of *Tempest(s)* its central trope of 'displacement' in both the actual world of social and cultural experience, and in the aesthetic world of representation.

The dramaturgy links a reading of the *The Tempest* with contemporary ideas of 'otherness' as experienced by migrants, refugees, the homeless and immigrant communities; and also as experienced on the level of the individual in contemporary society - for example in attitudes to

class, gender and sexuality - and in terms of everyday exclusions: where we can go, how we can meet others and so on. The experience of potential displacement and exclusion is clearly intensified in certain locations and situations, such as national borders, immigration control, social security structures. In such situations both physical spaces (the spaces of bureaucracy, the spaces of newsmedia, the negotiation of public space and private space) are intimately linked with language and the individual's abilities to negotiate languages of all types - from sign-systems to 'body-language' codes, to language groups.

Displacement in terms of aesthetics can be read through the shifts and slippages of the conventional elements of a classical Aristotelean aesthetics. It is used structurally at all levels of the performance itself effecting narrative lines, the use of text, of language, of characterisations, of objects and time, and of spatial sequencing.This effects aspects of how we see the artwork (visuality); how we read the artwork (textuality), how the elements (here in theatre terms) of character, object, space, time are used within the production. The performance imagery of *Tempest(s)* operates in both linear and non-linear terms, setting up both narrative and causal sequences, as well as non-linear, hypertextual parallels and linkages.

In *The Tempest* both Caliban and Miranda are displaced - the former through the effects of 'colonisation' , the latter through exile and separation. In *Tempest(s)* the characters of Caliban and Miranda are shown as a single shifting identity that may be recognised in each of us as individuals, and in the everyday social and cultural interactions we are involved with. The coherence and status of the dramatic character (at least in classical terms) is displaced with each performer as both Caliban and Miranda negotiating the projected images that are the illusions and power structures (happy families, ideal homes, social controls and legislation) of a disembodied Prospero, sometimes duplicating, sometimes subverting , always representing and merging with the 'live' presence of the performers. Ariel is the (sometime reluctant, sometime willing) agency of Prospero's authority and its idealisations in the form of the mechanics of projection.

The displacement of 'character' and personae as a strategy in Tempest(s) is paralleled in the use of text, both as speech (live, recorded, mixed) and as writing. The 'originary' fragments of text from The Tempest are either erased - literally written in chalk on the walls of the performance space and rubbed out- or projected unsubstantially as light; or removed from the mouths of the performers and replaced on multiple channels available to the audience on walkabout headsets. Thus the text of Tempest(s) becomes multiphonic, 'full of noises' inviting its audience to make choices between what is seen and what is heard, to alter and transform meanings through selection, to construct a montage of live and projected performance image. The channels included a 1960s radio version of The Tempest; a female voice quietly whispering increasingly provocative aphorisms and commonplaces around cultural attitudes to 'otherness'; a series of interviews with people living and working in the locality of the performance space - the multi-ethnic immigrant area around Istedgade and Vesterbro in Copenhagen; a series of recorded 'live' phone conversations home from the performers to their families or extended families both in Denmark and abroad. In the rare instances where performers 'took pains to [...] speak' the texts they utter reflect the difficulties of language - mutual incomprehension, the use of invented languages or of 'minority' languages, the difficulties experienced by the immigrant placed outside a language, the place and status of 'native' languages. At the centre of all these displacements and tensions is the exchange between Caliban and Miranda (II.ii 352-364) with its cultural assumptions and sense of unresolved confrontation and ambivalence.

Memory and utopia form two additional themes within the dramaturgy of Tempest(s) . These are informed not only by 'zeitgeist ' - by the kinds of cultural reflection that the turn of the millennium sets going - but more specifically through intertextual readings of Shakespeare's text and and Tempest(s); and through exposure to particular contemporary artists - for instance Christian Boltanski whose ideas of 'little memory' ('an emotional memory, an everyday knowledge') and 'small utopias' ('sweeping in front of your own door') seemed apposite for a project that is attempting to bring the local (the discourses of multi-culturalism and interculturalism in Denmark) and the global (discourse around power structures, immigration etc.) into relationship.

Tempest(s) was created with a group of people from very diverse ethnic, social and cultural backgrounds who, in proposing that the process and dynamics of theatre and performance parallels and interacts with the dynamics and operations of the contemporary world, recognised that theatre and performance do not simply reflect the world through establishing an 'other scene' or fictional world through which the relationships of the real world can be read.

Interculturalism implies the recognition of difference as a dynamic rather than as a category, an openness of discourse that moves beyond multi-culturalism. Theatre and performance are increasingly 'interdiciplines' drawing from a diverse range of processes and influences. The terms of engagement with performance, with artworks, are also being redefined along lines of difference: social and political dynamics are reflected in aesthetic dynamics. Simply put, the dynamics and processes of intercultural relations are paralleled in the dynamics and processes of performance work. The assumption is that artworks and performances exist not only as self-contained or self-reflexive entities within social or cultural contexts (the singular vision of late modernism) but in a shifting and dynamic relation to cultural, social and political realities. This change of perspective effects cultural and aesthetic assumptions and moves towards interdisciplinary and intercultural forms that act against the grain of both aesthetic and social monocultures.

Tempest(s) is shadowed throughout by the text of *The Tempest*. Reading back into and through the text of *The Tempest* is to open up the conditions within which Shakespeare was writing and to open up our own readings of those conditions and understanding of how we read. As a dramaturgical project *Tempest(s)* reads *The Tempest* outwards into the specifics and particularities of a contemporary urban situation, reads it outwards into the transforming structures of performance, into the placing of a project in a particular situation, for a particular audience. At the end of *Tempest(s)* the audience leaves down a long narrow corridor - a corridor of memory - lined and dimly lit by nine black glass topped plinths containing various texts or personal objects - for example a set of milk teeth, a blank sheet of paper and a pencil, a photograph of a railway line with a pair of compasses. On the wall beside each plinth is a photocopy of the identity papers and photos seen at the beginning of the performance. As in

The Tempest there is no resolution here - only ambivalence and ambiguity. The return home is a return to somewhere that is no longer home - is itself displaced - is in turn idealised and mythicised, a place from which we once again must depart. *The Tempest* - like the Boatswain's ship appearing 'tight and yare and bravely rigged' - is always 'freshly beheld'. But as it travels so it transforms. John Berger has spoekn of displacement as the impossibility of return for the migrant, for the refugee: 'Unchanging as the village is, he will never see it as he did before he left. He is seen differently and he sees differently'. In so far as *The Tempest* travels, it can never return.

++++++++

Ric Allsopp is a Joint Editor of the international journal 'Performance Research and founding partner of Writing Research Associates. He worked as dramaturg for the Terra Nova Theatre Institute production of Tempest(s) and is currently Research Fellow at Dartington College of Arts, UK.

Tempest(s) was produced by Terra Nova Theatre Institute in Copenhagen during April-May 1999. Director: Phillip MacKenzie; Dramaturg: Ric Allsopp; Scenographer: Luca Ruzza; Created with and Performed by: Borderland; Artistic Project Co-Ordinator: Antonio Cots Macia

++++++++

Section 3

Editorials

(1996)

Introduction to 'The Connected Body?'

in

The Connected Body? ed. R.Allsopp & S.deLahunta

Amsterdam: AHK, pp.6 -10

ISBN 90 -71681 -03 -3

The Connected Body?

An Introduction

Ric Allsopp & Scott deLahunta

The universe unfolds in the body, which is its mirror and its creature. Our era is critical; it has destroyed the old image of the world and as yet has not created another. That is why we do not have a body .... (Octavio Paz)

A fascination with the human body, its presence, location, status and identity continues to provide fuel for a debate surrounding the body that goes at least as far back as the fifth century bc when Herclitus noted that 'we are estranged from that with which we are most familiar'. Octavio Paz's sense of the contemporary difficulties in identifying what is 'the body' and what is meant by 'the body' (whether we accept his analysis or not) indicates a persistent disjunction in our attempts to integrate the body as a coherent site of representation and presence. The forms that frame this gap are many and varied, and dependent on perspective and approach. Within the discourses that surround contemporary performance, this gap is partly located an increasing disjunction between a 'theorised body' and an 'experienced body' where the the theorised body - as represented, gendered, located, presented or absented - is privileged over the inherent experience of the body and its systems.

This double status of the body in performance has become fundamental to its articulation in both modernist and post-modern practice . The body participates as a focus of experiment: as an experiential site - as presence, a dynamic, moving, transforming and resistant body; and as a site of representation - as reference, as object, as a complex of meanings. This oscillation of status resists any surety or fixity which might reduce the body in performance to either mere representation or simple biological presence. The body in twentieth century performance

becomes an ambivalent site which offers modalities of presence and reference, of physical activity and image. This ambivalence towards the body would seem to be a key dynamic in recent performance and performance theory.

The writer Lewis Hyde noted that 'a work of art is a gift, not a commodity'. There is an analogy to be made with this observation which concerns the marginalisation of the body in western culture. However much the recent revival of interest in the body has refocussed our attentions, the body remains (as Roy Porter points out below) an 'invisible' component of history, marginalised within a hierarchy of knowledge that privileges language and the mind. The body circulates within an economy that is predominantly concerned with its commodification. The exploration of the body as a means of resisting this economy, as a means of locating value on an individual and communal level became a central focus of the 1994 project 'The Connected Body?' of which this book is a partial document. As one of its participants observed:

> It was recognised that a major issue in the understanding of the body in
> performance is the tension between the ways in which we might experience the
> body as connected and the ways in which we might reflect upon and represent it
> as disconnected . This suggests an ontological and ideological tension between
> the body and the self. An individual might gain a sense of authenticity and
> connection with the self in and through the body during training, in particular
> through the varieties of holistic bodywork (BMC, yoga, etc.) explored during the
> practical sessions. However, many of the speakers during the conference
> proposed that this connection is profoundly disturbed by the discontinuous and
> unstable appropriations and ideological representations of the body throughout
> the history of western culture and within an increasingly mediatized and
> technologically driven world culture. (Nigel Stewart in NTQ vol. XI no.42 (1995)
> p.191)

The body is always interrogative - always a question, an ambivalence about what is experienced in the body and how the body is represented and constructed in the social, cultural and physical worlds that it inhabits and participates in. Is the body 'connected' and if so to what? Is the body disconnected? - and if so how? What impact on attitudes and strategies towards 'art making' as

performance, as dance, as theatre, are being made by contemporary critiques of the body, presence, representation, identity, subjectivity?

The impetus to draw together a number of influential artists and scholars in a gathering that would make possible an exploration of these questions, arose from a project held in 1993 by the Centre for Performance Research in Cardiff, UK on the points of contact between performance, shamanism and ritual. An ethnographic film 'Sucking Doctor' was screened as part of a presentation on shamanic practice by Professor Sam Gill of the University of Colorado. It documented a healing event in which a female Pomo Indian shaman 'cured' her husband in front of a gathering of witnesses. What we were struck by was not only the spatialisation of the event, its blend of the everyday and the 'non-ordinary', the theatrical and the magical, but the manner in which the healing process was induced by a literal 'hands on' manipulation of the body, a method which paralleled the type of 'hands on' work that we had seen and/ or been involved with in our associations with bodywork and new dance, particularly through the School for New Dance Development (SNDO) in Amsterdam. The conscious integration of pretence and actuality, of presence and reference in the film provoked our concern with the question of the connected body.

The connected body? As if the body were an experience that could somehow be held in common - a return to some primary collective physical experience untroubled by representation, gender, identity, presence. But this is also part of the question - the insistence of the body as physical presence , the commonalities of physical experience, the sense of the body as something that is shared, that speaks to us in ways that are increasingly difficult to keep in touch with. Perhaps the title could have been more appropriately called 'A Connected Body?

The Connected Body? project that grew from these beginnings was held at the SNDO in Amsterdam between August 20th- 28th, 1994 as a gathering of artists, scholars, educators and others whose work (seen as a field of exploration) embraced both the body's inherent connectedness and its cultural construction. The project was designed to bring together participants in a forum where radically different approaches to the body could be represented

through experiential, performative and discursive means, based on a common desire to seek connections and perspectives that would broaden understanding and practice in contemporary arts. The forum provided an opportunity to examine the effects of various contrasting discourses and practices on the body's representations in contemporary 'live art' and performance. In organising the project we sought to respond to the continuing need for intelligent thought and practice concerning the body; and a move towards a 'new authenticity' that accepts notions of the body's essential experience and constitution as well as its fragmentary and constructed nature.

Our approach to 'The Connected Body?'was interdisciplinary, reflecting both the concerns of contemporary performance and an eclectic curiosity on our part with what other disciplines have to say. Performance both draws from the specific techniques of a discipline or certain other forms of performance, and from its continuous blending with other disciplines, modalities of thought and specific contexts. Performance cannot avoid being 'contaminated' or transformed by theoretical shifts and perceptions. It is never possible for us to discover an authenticity that is not mediated by cultural attitude, social convention, or political ideology. The body is perhaps our final point of resistance and seems to many who explore its systems, its geographies and its histories, to hold out the promise of an authenticity which will transcend the limitations of its construction. Interdisciplinarity is not only a necessary exploration of the overlapping domains between disciplines, but also suggests that a new authenticity is always ambivalent, framed within given sets of constructs, a space that remains only 'in between'. Coming to conclusions, finding answers, creating endings or closures concerning the question of a connected body was never a part of our strategy.

We started to explore the gaps between fine art performance (as exemplified during the project and in various media by Marina Abramovic, Valie Export, Linda Montano, Alastair MacLennan, Sally Tallant and others) and dance/ performance work and holistic bodywork, especially 'new dance' with its insistence on corporeal experience which shifts the emphasis away from the body as representation towards a phenomenological body (as exemplified during the project by Deborah Hay, Eva Schmale, Jacques van Eijden, Les Ballets C.de la B). These disciplines seemed

to be drawing on attitudes, techniques and approaches to the body that , whilst often diametrically opposed, shared parallels, similarities and overlaps in their usage and representations of the body. In addition we wished to provide other takes and fixes on this indeterminable body and we sought practitioners and scholars from other disciplines whose work might shed light on the question of the body in performance: medical history, archeology, art and dance history. A number of approaches to the body including virtual technologies, we rejected, not because we doubted their significance but because we wished to keep the debate and practice aligned with the (increasingly problematic) idea of 'live work' - work for the body to do.

We hope that the present book both reflects and extends the 1994 project. It consists of statements and interviews from the artists involved who were asked to reconsider their relationship to the body in the light of their current work, or in response to the workshops and performances that they gave; likewise we asked the theorists and practitioners who presented conference papers to rework and extend their ideas. These statements and papers provide the backbone of the book and are accompanied by reports, quotations, and commentaries from participants in the project as well as other materials and images. We have attempted to structure the body of the book so that it will reflect the particular spirit of 'The Connected Body? - a sense of a creative collision of ideas, images, practices, attitudes and beliefs, and the construction of a temporary 'body politic' with its conflicts, contradictions, and confluences.

The work of the Belfast-based performance artist Alastair MacLennan who was invited as artist-in-residence, and the American performance artist Linda Montano who took up 'astral residence' for the duration of the event, deserves special mention because of a comparative 'invisibility' in the placing of their work. Their very different but related explorations of physical 'presence/ absence' provided an important touchstone for the project. The instructions for the Linda Montano Room begin the book, and the Room itself is 'visited' in Johannes Lothar Schröders 'Letter to Linda Montano' in Part II. We have also attempted to place the new photo-textwork that Alastair MacLennan has provided for us throughout the body of the book as 'actuations for the page', paralleling the daily 'actuations' he made during the project.

The rest of our material - artist's statements, papers, commentaries and marginalia - has been grouped around the themes of the four panel discussions so ably focused by Claire MacDonald and Dorine Mignot that took place during the 1994 conference.

In Part I: The Body and Healing, following the description of the Linda Montano Room, we have a recent interview with Marina Abramovic whose exploration of the thresholds of the physical and psychological in her internationally recognized performance and related artwork needs very little introduction. Marina Abramovic discusses the 'transformation of the known into something unknown' in relation to her workshop 'Cleaning the House'; and a new approach to risk for her which, while still involving the preparation of the body for a state of openness in which anything is possible, may be more playful. Enzo Cozzi's account of his on-going fieldwork on healing and devotional dances amongst the mestizo populations and Aymara peoples of Chile touches on aspects of social and self-healing 'by negotiating conflict and building bridges, and searching for the harmonization of contraries.' This resonates with the ideas of conflict resolution that are at the heart of Alastair MacLennan's work and the 'work of integration' Fiona Sampson discusses in her poetic response to connections between body and mind. By contrast Professor Roy Porter's provocative paper on how the eighteenth century 'body politic' utilized medical representations of the human body for political purposes, resists the cultural hierarchies and prejudices which have resulted in the traditional 'disembodied histories' of western europe by asserting the 'powerful presence of the body' within them. We should add that Roy Porter's article as reproduced here has been severely reduced from a much longer script which he prepared for 'The Connected Body?' conference. His lecture was profusely illustrated and the full script relies on specific references to illustrations which we were unable to include in this book.

In Part II:The Represented Body, the Viennese art historian and curator Silvia Eiblmayr provides some detailed commentary on a sequence of images from the work of the Austrian media- and body-artist Valie Export. These images formed a part of her analytical presentation on Export's 'feminist actionism' in which Export's use of the live body as a 'material part of the structure of representation' was made explicit. The statements by Johannes Lothar Schröder, the British

performance artist Sally Tallant and the American dancer and choreographer Deborah Hay
provide an instance of approaches to the body as a site of representation that are seemingly
irreconcilable,   yet have interesting overlaps. Schröder's 'Letter to Linda Montano' explicitly
makes a transition across the apparent gap between Valie Export's work and the literal 'holism'
reflected in Deborah Hay's statement 'What I call my mind is my whole body. What I call my
body is fifty–three trillion cells'. Sally Tallant's provocative installation 'Scar' predicates itself on
an interaction which implicates the audience, both literally and metaphorically, in the violation
of the body.   Finally, Ron Buzl's 'Ah ha Nada!' describes the process of Deborah Hay's workshop
'Intrinsically Appropriate Dancing' which suggests a place beyond representation.

In Part III: The Body as Process, the German performer Eva Schmale provides a recent statement
on her attitudes towards the body and articulates in committed terms the body as the site of
perceptual awareness and understanding, a body that resists the reductionism of language and
the alienating effect of mediatized images. Eva Schmale's work consistently attempts to shift the
body from the 'invisible and disembodied' histories that marginalize it towards a recognition of
its centrality and 'resistant potential'. In a different sense, Johannes Birringer in 'Reconstructions'
sees the body operating on the periphery and places the body in the 'between' space of the
'border.' He argues that our bodies (whether individual, social or collective) are capable of being
experienced because they are symbolic systems which participate in a political struggle over
identity and legitimation and 'derive their authority from the symbolic which, politically
speaking, is a mechanism of dominance'. The Dutch dancer and choreographer Pauline de Groot
places the dancing body in everday circumstances outside the theater, where an awareness of
'the specific dimension of the moment' enacts a process of transformation within the daily
routines of life. Robert Schwarz in his paper on 'Body, Space and Idea' develops a relationship
between the body and language that sees the body as a process of spatialisation that inscribes
itself in language.

In the final section of the book - Part IV: The Constructed Body, both Mike Pearson and Claudia
Jeschke develop extensive structuralist approaches to the performative body that are
complemented by the literal transcription of a Body-Mind Centering class by Jacques van Eijden

and the reflections on the on-stage and off-stage body provided by Belgian choreographer Alain Platel (Les Ballets C. de la B.). In mirroring theater and archaeology, Mike Pearson draws on theater to 'suggest how the body (in the past) might engage with surface and volume, with object and backdrop in extremis and in repose', and on archaeology to suggest that 'the truly "connected body" must exist in time, deep time, as well as space'. Claudia Jeshke's paper 'Representing the Body' provides an illuminating typology of the phenomenological body in dance in relation to strategies of dramaturgy and choreography from the sixteenth century to the present. Like Roy Porter's paper, Claudia Jeschke's was extensively illustrated at 'The Connected Body?' conference, and we are only able to reproduce a representative selection of the slide images she used. Claudia Jeschke's closing remarks assert that a disjunction between the body as presence and the body as representation do not apply 'to a body used in a theatrical context' where 'the phenomenological body was never disconnected from the strategies of representation, i.e. of dramaturgy or choreography.'

The book we have compiled here from material relating to the 1994 'Connected Body?' project is an expression the diverse and complex circumstances of the body in relation to performance. It contains extensive boundaries of space and time, and numerous borders of imagery and ideas. We encourage the reader to sample the special circumstances of each author and look for insights inherent in each specialist approach to the body and performance. In reading this book, we hope the atmosphere of collision and overlap will provide a sense of the excitement generated by the original project, and support the notion of a new authenticity that embraces complementary and contradictory positionsvis a vis the body as we move into a future where questions of the identity and experience of the body will be as pressing as ever.

+++++++

(1996)

Editorial for 'On Illusion'

Performance Research, Vol.1, No.3

London: Routledge, ppvi - ix

ISBN 0 -415 -16210 -6

Editorial: On Illusion

Ric Allsopp

The Polish theatre director Tadeusz Kantor ' after years of anti-illusionary work' stated that 'illusion shifts reality onto another track, the track of poetry' (Plesniarowicz 1994: 45). This track is earlier projected by Charles Olson in his discussion of an 'open field' poetics (Olson 1966: 16): 'the poet [...] can go by no track other than the one the poem under hand declares, for itself'. I have always liked the ambiguity of this phrase ' the poem under hand declares' for its grasp of, the way it catches the meanings of 'under hand' as holding together images of control, craft and process with deception, artifice and risk. It is a phrase that aptly contains the mutual inseparability of illusion and the real within the project of performance; an image that echoes the various 'under hand' approaches to illusion that make up the conversation of this third issue of Performance Research. The conversations on illusion take two broad but not exclusive positions : illusion as magical trick or illusionist spectacle; and illusion as an approach to the problems of 'the real' and identity. As a whole they point towards radical uses of illusion as a means of framing performance work.

At the shrine of the Black Virgin of Guadalupe in Extrémadura you can ascend a broad stairway from behind the Chapel of the Virgin, that brings you to the 'camarín', presided over in each corner by the waxen figures of Miriam, Judith, St. Catherine and St.Anne , almost life-like in their flower-decked vitrines. The camarín forms an antechamber to the shrine of Our Lady of Silence. When enough visitors have climbed the stairway - pilgrims from the eastern bloc (it is 1987) , local devotees, a man on his way home from work, cultural tourists - a monk appears from a small door concealed in the panelling and guides you into the shrine. Your attention is drawn to an enamelled panel between two openings that look down onto the nave of the chapel. It shows the miraculous episodes of the Black Virgin. The monk narrates each image in turn   - the burial in Guadalupe of the statue in 711 after defeat by the Saracens; the rediscovery of the

statue by a cowherd named Gil in 1326; the visitation of popes and kings to the shrine. The air

of expectancy grows more tangible . As the final episode is completed the monk discretely

presses a lever which spins the Black Virgin into vision, turned like a page of the book she so

oddly resembles. The inspiration - the literal intake of breath at this small disclosure - effects us

all. For some it is a revelation, the culmination of an arduous journey, the possibility of a divine

intervention within the everyday (an illness cured, a marriage saved, a trespass

forgiven); for others it is a brief moment of theatre, or of storytelling, of showmanship which

might recall Herbert Blau's comment that the 'illusion [is] so exhausted by history that it can

barely reproduce itself' (Blau 1992: 27).

By way of beginning, these conversations are framed by Nicholas Zurbrugg's meditation on an

extract from Jean Baudrillard's recently published book 'The Perfect Crime' (1996:20-24) which

begins with the epigraph: 'Given the mass of evidence, there is no plausible hypothesis but

reality. Given the mass of evidence to the contrary, there is no solution but illusion.' The extract

- entitled 'The Radical Illusion' - argues that it is the 'proliferation of reality' produced by

simulation, that is 'our true catastrophe'; and that illusion, not the real, opposes simulation.

Only therefore through restoring the potency of illusion can the exponential curve of the real

be exceeded. The Chicago -based perfomance group Goat Island, resident in the UK during the

spring and summer of this year, have collectively contributed an 'Illusiontext' both as a form of

active documentation of the processes of creating their new performance (How Dear To Me The

Hour When Daylight Dies, May 1996) and as a testimony to the uses of illusion in exceeding the

real - 'this performance will hurt'.

The hierarchy of Western metaphysics has prioritised the real over illusion. The effects of this on

notions of presence and absence within performance, initiates Andrew Quick's discussion of the

differing tensions between ' the operation[s] of representation, of repetition, of illusion' and the

ontology and presence of 'the real' itself in performance. The now largely hidden work of the

seminal English theatre company Impact Theatre (active 1976-86) is 'unearthed' and re-read

through the work of Derrida, Lacan and Zizek and their deconstructions of 'the real'.

The performances of 'The Only Leon' - the 'most successful female impersonator in nineteenth-century blackface minstrelsy' are re-read by Annemarie Bean, in her article Presenting the Prima Donna , as constructing and securing , through gender transgression, both the identity of the dominant white male and black female sexuality. Such uses of illusion to mediate social desires through a 'performed cultural imaginary' are then taken up from a psychological perspective in Etzel Cardeña's Truthful Trickery: Shamanism, Acting and Reality. The analogies between forms of shamanic performance and the methods of the western acting tradition allow us to question the usual distinctions between pretence and reality , appearance and substance. Illusion when used in particular performative ways can have concrete and real effects on the subject, not only therapeutically, but also as 'a jarring step' from illusion to a reality beyond the circumstances of the everyday.

Simon Herbert's interview with the Belfast performance artist André Stitt whose work since 1976 has explored the extremities of life and art describes this 'jarring step' and the very real implications of the risk of illusion, from the perfomer's view point in . The implications of such an intensified individual journey by the artist confront us with the nature of social responsibility, the possibilities of redemption and the edge between the illusion and reality of performance. The question of art and artifice - a debate resurrected by the impact and insistence of new media technologies - is identified by Baudrillard, in terms that evoke the work of André Stitt:

> True artifice is the artifice of the body in the throes of passion, the artifice of the sign of seduction, the artifice of ambivalence in gesture ...
> (1993: 51)

Baudrillard argues that artifice as ' the power of illusion' is in no way concerned with what generates reality, but with what alters reality. The distinction is in trying to understand the uses of illusion rather than the meanings of illusion. As Michael Mangan points out in his article on Elizabethan uses of 'jugling and conjuring' ... and so shall you seem to have cut your nose in sunder' , northern renaissance culture displayed a nervousness of the 'jugler' and 'conjurer' - a

nervousness that is still apparent. Operating on the margins and periphery of culture (which is the habitual 'place' of performance) - such 'juglers and conjurers' enable us to experience an altered reality - a reality that might hold the possibility of a different future.

The 'staging' of illusion is a problem that is taken up in Lynne MacRitchie's articles on the work of the British performance artist Rose English; in the performance writings of Caroline Bergvall, and in Exe Christoffersen's survey of a 'nomadic dramturgy' in the work of the Danish theatre company Hotel Pro Forma.

Lynne MacRitchie guides us through the work of Rose English and particularly 'her deconstruction of the thaumaturgy - the wonderworking - of theatre'. Her rigorous examination of the terms and subtle distinctions that construct the conventions of theatre, has typified her work since the mid 1970s. English's interest in the ways in which theatre stages and spatializes the illusionary is echoed in the writings of Caroline Bergvall. The uses of illusion and the vestiges of the real, the identity or displacement of text with the spatiality of surface are ideas that Bergvall addresses 'for the page' in the documentation of her recent (May 1996) text installation <u>Eclat: Occupation des Lieux, 1-10</u>. Here and in the 'live' performance of the text, the work keeps ironically pointing to the frequent ruptures between the play of illusory spatiality in the text, and the reading and consequent perception of the actual space of performance. The <u>trompe l'oeil</u> as 'an imitation of nature which conjurs up a world woven through with features of the real' as Exe Christoffersen puts it in his survey of the work of the Danish theatre company Hotel Pro Forma, 'points to the fact that limits exist whilst at the same time being a fiction and a passage to another fiction'. Their work since 1986 has explored not only the formal aspects of illusion, but also the status of marginality and ambiguity in audience - performer relationships. Christoffersen also reads the work through a notion of a 'nomadic' dramaturgy: a 'restless' non-linear dramaturgy somewhere between movement and being, format and identity.

Theatre and performance are forms that play within the ephemeral, the disappearing; forms that occupy a ludic space held in tension by momentary shifts between presence and absence.

Baudrillard has elsewhere referred to the disappearance of the 'soul of art' - 'Art with its power of illusion, its capacity for negating reality, for setting up an 'other scene' in opposition to reality ...' and observes that all disappearing forms seek to duplicate themselves by simulation (1993:14). In Baudrillard's terms the intensity and ubiquity of aesthetics produce a 'profusion of images' in which there is nothing to see but the grand illusion of the spectacle.

André Lepecki's reading of Kantor's 'room of memory' and his discussion of the invisibility of the dance is an example of recent work that is pointing towards the dematerialisation of the 'object of performance'. It is not only the art object that is dematerialising. The ephemerality of performance itself becomes more and more the locus of critical thinking. The dematerialised trace and 'origin' of of dance and its recollection in the act of writing brings to bear another contemporary theorisation of the illusion/ real as the 'spectacle' - the commodification of life - which increasingly erodes the realm of 'free' and 'unalienated experience'; or as Guy Debord (Plant 1992:13) put it 'the real consumer becomes a a consumer of illusions. The commodity is this factually real illusion, and the spectacle is its general manifestation'

Relations between the sonic and the visual occupy Nicholas Till in his review of the 1996 performances of Varése's Déserts with accompanying film by Bill Viola; and Schubert's ''Winterreise' staged by Boltanski and Kalman. The conversation is extended through Emil Hvratim's exploration of the uses of the 'the scream' in the work of the Belgian artist Jan Fabre who 'spatialises the scream [...] as a stain on the visual field, as something that surrounds us, from which we cannot escape, but that we cannot hear, or not see.'

The power of illusion is eating away at the edges and interstices of the 'real' as it is ordinarily constituted. It is perhaps these moments of illusion that allow us to move forward in the way suggested by Matthew Goulish in his Five Microlectures, through attention to the 'clearly shifting detail' of accumulating moments that begin to constitute a 'recognizable pattern'. John Hall, in his continuing series on grammar and performance, 'Performed through' , marks the actualisation of writing and speech as perfomative events through the ways in which

grammar acts as a means of actualising language in writing, speech and thought.

Ideas of articfice and fabrication, and how they allow us to visualise and construct our cultural imaginaries characterise the artist's pages we have commissioned for this issue. Rod Dickinson's work 'W.S.H.' explores questions of agency in the relation between art and fabrication, hoaxing and illusion, whilst the pages from Rose English act as a sort of 'premonition' for an as yet unrealised show. Playing somewhere in between artifice and reality, the Swiss theatre artist Hans-Peter Litscher pays hommage to the illustrious Italian mountainscape painter Giovanni Sagatini in 'Caduta Massi'. The visual artists Wendy Kirkup and Pat Naldi provide us with a visualisation of sonic extensions in space in a screen-shot from their sound installation 'Cross-Winds' at the 1995 Adelaide Festival. The 'conversations' conclude with bokk reviews from claire MacDonald, cris cheek, and Peter Hulton; and a review of the Tadeusz Kantor archive in Krakow, Poland.

The shrine at Guadelupe haunts a second more recent image. At the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam (it is 1993) you can ascend a broad stairway from the entrance hall and the garde robe that will bring you to the Gary Hill exhibition which starts in the main gallery on the first floor. In front and to your right you will see an installation Crux (1983-1987) consisting of five video monitors 'mounted on the wall positioned to suggest the configuration of a cross as well as the elements of the human body, respecting its proportions, with head, two hands, and two feet. [...] A large, composite [moving] image, pieced together by the body's limbs, is presented on the monitors' (Stedelijk Museum 1993:75). The place of the body, the torso itself is absent, a void filled only with the imaginary implied by the five flickering 'vitrines'. Moving further into the gallery you will reach the darkened entrance to Tall Ships (1992) . This oracular installation, consists of 'a completely dark, ninety-foot long corridor-like space, [in which] sixteen black and white images of people, varying in ethnic origin, age and gender, are projected directly onto the walls. No border of light defines the frame of the images: only the figures themselves give off light into the space. The last projection is on the back wall, at the end of the corridor' (Stedelijk 1993: 98). In this silent space, peopled by the moving and projected ghosts of the familiar, the everyday , the narratives of each 'meeting' are constructed by each one of us alone, the

revelation no longer attempts to speak collectively within the logic of theatre. For some it is a play of light, a technical demonstration, a silent slide show in an age of movies and home video; for others these mute meetings are filled with unspoken conversations, with intense emotional impact, a displacement between virtual and real space that is intensified to such an extent that we find ourselves 'taking place', a transformation that turns inside ourselves.

Illusion lies in the space between these two images of Guadalupe and the Stedelijk. And so with 'nimble conveyance' I must declare that this particular 'under hand' process of trying to let the constellations of material in this issue find a form has only been made possible by the work and generosity of others, in particular the contributors, all those who have read and commented on submissions for us, and not least Clancy, Claire, Richard, and Simon Josebury, to \whom I offer the final lines of Wallace Steven's 1937 meditation on the impossibility of grasping the real - 'The Man With the Blue Guitar': '

> We shall forget by day, except/
> The moments when we chose to play
> The imagined pine, the imagined jay.

••••••••

References:

Baudrillard, Jean (1993) The Transparency of Evil, London: Verso

Baudrillard, Jean (1996) The Perfect Crime, London: Verso

Blau, Herbert (1992) To All Appearances, PAJ - Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore

Olson, Charles (1966) Collected Writings, ed. Robert Creeley, New York: New Directions

Plesniarowicz, Krzysztof (1994) The Dead Memory Machine , trans. William Brand, Cricoteka: Krakow

••••••••

(1997)

Editorial for 'Letters from Europe'

Editorial: Letters from Europe

Ric Allsopp

January is a good time to plant trees - at least in the temperate south-west of England where I live. We planted five apple trees (Tom Putt, Reynold's Peach, Pig's Snout) - as part of a larger local effort to restore native varieties to the environment, and to reestablish the apple orchards that once gave the region what is now called its 'local distinctiveness'. Whilst we dug holes, knocked in stakes, sprinkled bone-meal under the roots, planted the trees, and pressed down the earth, an inescapable feeling of commitment to a locality, to a continuity, to the particular, linked itself to a train of connections and thoughts - the chance meetings and conversations, the letters, postcards, and e-mails that have become Letters from Europe.

Tree planting is a resonant act at whatever level it is carried out - investing a set of personal or public memories within the act - attaching a significance beyond the purely functional. I thought of the memorials that this issue contains - to the dead of Ulster and to the Catalan artist Esteve Graset who died in April last year - and the differences with which those passings (in Bill Viola's sense) are marked or inscribed. The archives that I visited in Amsterdam (Montevideo) and Cologne (Deutsches Tanzarchiv)in the autumn - stand also as living and developing testimonies to the continuing visions of their founders and their archivists and the presence of artists linking the past to the future.

The places of art and performance are widely diverse and are not as we might suppose necessarily subject to an overriding view or voice. Views of what constitutes performance and how it communicates or conflicts with people differ sharply. Lilijana Sedlar's Letter from Serbia discussing her reaction to what she describes as the institutional legitimisation and promotion of particular forms of performance work is a case in point. I am struck by the fact that what

seem to be the central aesthetic and cultural concerns of 'western Europe' rapidly become

marginal and peripheral as locality shifts and different geographic and cultural perspectives

come into play.

Dragan Klaic argues in his letter that if we are to secure the arts as the 'only viable cornerstone

of European integration' it requires placing the arts within a broader socioeconomic picture, of

elaborating a linkage between culture and cultural industry, of recognising mutual dependencies

and benefits. Ideas of performance fall beyond the differences of language with which we

habitually refer to them. I remembered sitting in a bar in Germany with the musician and light

designer Michael Vorfeld after hearing his live acoustic percussion work. We talked about

notation and I asked how he might make a light and sound work for the page. I liked your point

about the particularity of letters, their localism, the way in which they intercede between the

live and the written - somehow not quite fixed, not yet congealed into the solidity (and

authority) of 'text'. This fluidity , and the difficulties of placing the text with any surety and

finality within performance is also what the issue starts to touch on in its discussions of text and

dramaturgy . The letter forms a communication between the displacements and dislocations of

text and image - a 'discharge of energy' between two shifting and uncertain poles - a means of

building up an accumulation of details through which other voices, other images begin to

appear. This seems close to Hans-Thies Lehmann's view that

> If theatre used to be defined as a kind of fictive cosmos presented to a public by means
> of theatre signs, theatre now tends more and more to be defined as a special and unique
> situation [...] in the sense of the construction of a theatrical moment where a kind of
> communication different from everyday talk could possibly, virtually, structurally
> happen.

As I re-read these Letters from Europe now much of the issue seems to be concerned with the

place of the text (fluid or solid) as, in, through performance . John Hall, in his continuing series

on grammar and performance, marks the placing of writing and speech as performative events in

themselves through the ways in which grammar acts as a means of actualising language in

writing, speech and thought. Nick Kaye in his interviews with Needcompany observes that in their work 'the text is a surface against which other things are seen': letters point to images beyond the text - always open, like performance, to a 'falling out of language, out of the principle structures of meaning' as Rudi Laermans puts it. Letters point to the silences and gaps that have opened up in the structures of the art work as much as in the realities of individual and community conflict in Bosnia, in Ulster, in so many cities and places of Europe.

It is perhaps in these moments that the letters begin again - communications from the living, conversations with history, with the dead, with the 'not-anymore', with the 'not-yet' - conversations that begin to solidify into texts, into the edifices of identity, ideology, of persuasion, or prejudice that performance might challenge, undercut in its transitory but effective discharges.

◆◆◆◆◆◆

(1999)

Editorial for 'On Line'

Editorial: On Line

Ric Allsopp

Utterance Zero:

Almost 40 years ago at the beginnings of the 'new electric age' Marshall McLuhan ended his
study of 'the making of typographic man' by observing that:

> Even without collision, such co-existence of technologies and awareness brings trauma and
> tension to every living person. Our most ordinary and conventional attitudes seem
> suddenly twisted into gargoyles and grotesques. Familiar institutions and associations
> seem at times menacing and malignant. These multiple transformations, which are the
> normal consequence of introducing new media into any society whatever, need special
> study ....' (1962:278-9)

Even since our initial discussions for an issue on performance and digital media, both the
technologies and 'the forms of experience and of mental outlook and expression' as McLuhan put
it, have transformed. Digital technology is no longer so much 'out there', accessible only to
research institutions or specialists, but is 'right here' - becoming rapidly available in the mass
market and 'interiorized' in our general consciousness. 'When technology extends one of our
senses, a new translation of culture occurs as swiftly as the new technology is interiorized'
(McLuhan,1962:41). The domain of performance arts [reflective, explorative, confrontational] is
both absorbed and transformed by the impact of new media technologies. The relationship
however remains symbiotic: performance and technology interpret and challenge each other.

The 'constellation of events' which make up this issue were chosen from a flood of high quality
submissions. We wanted in particular to point towards the less familiar registers and sensibilities
of european performance research , for example the constellation of work from artists and

scholars in Slovenia [Bojana Kunst, Marina Grzinic and Marko Peljhan]. Despite the apparent ubiquity of digital media , its ability to dislocate, to open up virtual spaces that resist the pull of conventional 'geography', the work represented here is still geographically particularised. Digital media and its performance remain intimately linked with localised conditions and attitudes. There is an emphasis too on the impact of digital media on our perceptions of and use of the body - that most conventional vehicle of 'predigital' performance - which might enable us to re-examine cultural issues and values embedded and inscribed in the body, and by extension, in architecture and wider constructs of the 'body politic'. We have also wanted to include work that is not so obviously related to the 'on line' theme (for example Paul Carter's 'Invisible Theatre' and Enzo Cozzi et al. 'The Laughing Dead ...') to remind ourselves that both the digital world and the vernacular tradition are both powerfully concerned with 'ghosts' , with the ability to create other worlds, to transform the means of being in the world through performance.

Ivan Illich, another commentator on the impact of print culture on consciousness has argued that 'memory is a child of the alphabet' (Illich, 1989:15). If this is the case, then we might well at this point begin to ask what will be the equivalent off-spring of digital media. The articles, reviews, utterances and artist's pages that we have gathered in this issue explore the impact of digital media both on performance and wider cultural practices and values. They begin, in their differing ways, and like the images from Rafael Lonzano's installation 'Re-Positioning Fear' [see pp. 52-56], to 'shadow' a very different sense of what constitutes 'performance' in a digital environment, and what alters and transforms the modes of understanding our 'worlds'. Finally, and not least, we have (with generous support from the Arts Council of England) been able to commission digital work from UK artists for the first Performance Research CD-ROM which accompanies this issue [see p.124]. I would like to thank all who have contributed to this issue of Performance Research, in particular Clancy Pegg, Ros Spry, Huw Williams at Broadcast Solutions, and my indefatigable co-editor and colleague Scott deLahunta .

♦♦♦♦♦♦♦

(2000)

Editorial for 'Openings'

Editorial: Openings

Ric Allsopp & David Williams

Openings that is, as two-way flow, as dynamic reaching outwards, drawing inwards and backwards, openings that displace the directionalities of time, visuality and expectation - seemed to be an appropriate fix for how performance work is presently being framed, discussed, rethought, contextualised, practised. Openings that is, as fluid, indeterminate, undecided, ambiguous fields for performance.The openness of performance, the increasing difficulties of positioning or defining or delimiting performance in old terms. Or perhaps opening a new book and smelling its pages, accepting that the traces of its processes pass through the openings of one's body and circulate, move (in) us stimulating the potential articulation of an exchange between inside/ outside, visible/ invisible, self/ other. How to allow oneself to be open to displacements in the advent/ event of meaning(s)? How to dance around the slide towards final solutions? To be open to not knowing, to the blindspots that ghost all ways of seeing. As the fields of performance shift and fracture in relation to altering contexts - whether contexts of media, of culture, of practice, of research - so the openness of the work, its capability of resisting conventional frames, of existing as a fragile, ephemeral flow or as resistant or playful intervention, becomes a significant vector of discourse.

The work of preparing and editing this issue is necessarily interwoven with our other activities in the field of performance. The conversations which have lead to this particular set of materials are shot through with other readings, with work that we have made, that we have witnessed, with work that we were unable to include in these limited pages. We talked of Christopher Lloyd's Fester in The Adams Family film, lifting a book from a shelf in the gothic library, then opening it to unleash a storm that strikes his face and fills the room; its covers contain a virtual tempest that can only be calmed by snapshut closure, replacement on the shelf, return to the orderly. All books, all writing should be tempest-machines. Vortices. Energetic overflowings. Landscapes of the passage. Why else would one write? Why else would one read? Where does the wind travel, and how to attend to the trajectories and transient forms of the aeolian debris?

On a cold, sunlit day in February, a young Israeli art student begins to move a vast pile of empty blue or white 50 litre translucent plastic containers from where they lie abandoned at one corner

of the goods yard in the now disused railway station in Jerusalem, to an equally derelict room inside the railway sheds. The sounds of each of her journeys, the physical effort of dragging a train of ten or more containers threaded together on a rope, across the yard and over the cobbled stone floor of the shed, is recorded on a dictaphone in her coat pocket. This solitary cyclical work continues largely unobserved and unremarked throughout the morning.

The derelict room gradually begins to fill with containers. At a certain point this part of the work stops. For those who now come across the work as spatial object, as suspended event, the room is left either half-filled or half-emptied - a train of containers abandoned either half-in or half-out of the doorway. Indeterminate taped sounds emerge from deep within the pile of containers - ambivalent, difficult to pinpoint spatially or descriptively. The openness of this work - the simplicity and clarity of its structure and its process; the complexity and ambiguity of its associations - provides a marker of the articulation of openness with which this present issue is concerned.

The philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy in The Gravity of Thought (1997) writes of meaning as opening, and invites us to think on the limit, to be 'passible' (xvii) to the open character of the event of meaning, its inappropriable opening up at/ of the limits of subjectivity. Opening of meaning - meaning as opening. Meaning's exposure at the limits. Thought that is ex-posed to the irrecuperable excess of and in meaning which Nancy terms the 'figure': 'A figure would be the entire weight of a thought: its way, not of "thinking" meaning (of elaborating its signification) but of letting it weigh, just as it comes, just as it passes away, heavy or light, and always at the same time heavy and light' (82).

The work of the American artist Morgan O'Hara (p.41-2 below) provides us with two 'live transmissions' - traces of compassionate contemplations that displace the parameters of subjectivity by letting the elsew/here weigh, just as it comes, just as it passes away. The work is a small sample of a extensive and ongoing body of 'live transmissions' registering movement - particularly hand-movements - in all sort of different contexts and circumstances. This work places itself at that opening between the fixity of registration and the ephemerality of what it registers, at the limits of attention to the solidity of event and the fluidity of its passing. It is surrounded in this issue by an array of articulations and propositions with regard to openings: in and of meaning, identity, perception, the mapping of memory, the materiality of writing and its processes, the textualising of the ephemeral, of dis/appearance. Brian Catlin's 'invisible shapeshifting mass', the blur of truth and death on its forehead: the writing of sculpture as 'an obstinate gift to the imagination, a curve from the seclusion of possession'. Anna Furse's desire

176

to 'make jargon sing', by inscribing embodied histories of resonances and associations lurking within the cinders of past events and experiences. Lisa Lewis's mapping of the volatile nexus of memory, place, identity, and of the thresholds between constitutive space-times in 'Welshness'. John Downie's discussion of a 'cinematographic theatre' practice in New Zealand, drawing on Deleuze's notion of cinema as affecting 'the visible with a fundamental disturbance, and the world with a suspension, which contradicts all natural perception', producing 'the unthought in thought, the birth of the visible which is still hidden from view'. Carlyle Reedy's 'museum of the process' in work that Alaric Sumner celebrates as 'radically uncertain, constantly changing, unknowing - open to referential seepage'. Koen Tachelet's tracking of the inevitability of the 'meaningful absences' in blindspots, the no-mans-lands they create, and of interactive displacement as ethical responsibility. Valentina Valentini's account of the possible worlds in Heiner Müller's feral dramaturgy, of theatre as 'motion in a space studded with questions that have no answers'. The ambiguities and ellipses of Josef Nadj's work: the mysterious, the unfathomable, the labyrinthine, the blindness and in-sight of contemplation. Joshua Sofaer's analysis of positionality, the fixity of meaning, and the continual reappraisal and reinvention of the role of the spectator (the winner of our annual Essay Competition entry).

The next issue of Performance Research - 'On Animals' (ed. Alan Read) - will extend these reflections through materials which attempt to think (on) the limit of the 'human'. For their invaluable help in the preparation of this issue, the issue editors would like to thank Clancy Pegg, Kevin Mount, Marta Braun, the Musée Marey in Beaune.

◆◆◆◆◆◆◆

Section 4

Performance Texts

(1999)

'Firetables XII – Text for Machine Assisted Reading

Systems'

Language aLive, No.3, ed. C.Bergvall

Lowestoft: Sound & Language (2000)

ISBN 1 -899 -100 -12 1

Fire Table XII

A Text for Machine Assisted Reading Systems*

....

....

.... .v...... .v... ..v... ...v.. .....v.

.......v ....v. ....v.. ...v... ..v.... .v...... v...... .v...... ...v... ....v.. .....v. ....v .....v. ....v.. ...v... ..v.... .v...... v.......

.v..... ...v... ....v.. .....v. ....v .....v. ....v.. ...v... ..v.... .v..... v....... .v...... ...v... ....v.. .....v. ....v .....v. ....v..

...v... ..v.... .v...... .v...... v....... .v...... ...v... ....v.. ....v. ....v .....v. ....v.. ...v... ..v.... .v..... v....... .v...... ...v... ....v..

....v. ....v .....v. ....v.. ...v... ..v.... .v...... v....... .v...... ...v... ....v.. ....v. ....v .....v. ....v.. ...v... ..v.... .v.....

v....... .v...... ...v... ....v.. ....v. ....v .....v. ....v.. ...v... ..v.... .v..... v...... vi.....v.i.... v..i... v...i.. v...i. v....i

v.....i v....i. v...i.. v.i.. vi..... vis.... vi.s... vi..s.. vi...s. vi....s. vi...s. vi..s.. vi.s... vis.... visi... vis.i...

vis..i. vis...i vis.i. vis.i.. visi... visib.. visi.b. visi..b visi.b. visib.. visibl. visib.l visibl. visible m..... .m....

..m... ...m.. ....m. .....m ....m. ...m.. ..m... .m.... m...... m..... me.... m..e... m..e.. m...e. m....e m....e. m..e..

m.e... me.... mem... me.m.. me..m. me...m me..m. me.m.. mem... memo.. mem.o. mem..o mem.o. memo..

memor. memo.r memor. memory memory memory memory memory memory memor. memo.r

memor. memo.. mem.o. mem..o mem.o. memo.. mem... me.m.. me..m. me...m me..m. me.m.. mem...

me.... m..e.. m..e.. m...e. m....e m...e. m..e.. m.e... me.... m..... .m..... ..m... ...m.. ....m. .....m ....m. ...m..

..m... .m.... m..... m..... visible visibl. visib.l visibl. visib.. visi.b. visi..b visi.b. visib.. visi... vis.i... vis..i.

vis...i vis..i. vis.i.. visi... vis.... vi.s... vi..s.. vi...s. vi....s. vi...s. vi..s.. vi.s... vis.... vi.....v.i.... v..i... v...i.. v....i.

v.....i v....i v...i.. v..i.. v..i.. v.i.... vi..... v....... .v...... ...v... ....v.. ....v. ....v .....v. ....v.. ...v... ..v.... .v..... .v......

v....... v....... .v...... ...v... ....v.. ....v. ....v ....v. ....v.. ..v... ..v.... .v..... v....... v...... .v...... ...v... ....v... ....v.. ......v.

.......v .....v. ...v... ..v... ..v.... .v..... .v...... v...... v....... .v...... ...v... ....v.. ....v. ....v ....v. ...v... ..v... ..v.... .v....

v....... v....... .v...... ...v... ....v.. ....v. ....v ....v. ...v.. ..v... ..v.... .v..... v....... ....

....

....

.... v....... .v...... ...v... ....v.. ....v. ....v ....v. ...v.. ..v... ..v....

.v..... v....... vi....v.i... v..i... v...i. v....i. v....i v....iv ...i. v...i.. v..i.. v..i.. vi..... vis.... vi.s... vi..s.. vi...s.

vi....s. vi...s. vi..s.. vi.s... vis.... visi... vis.l... vis..i. vis...i vis.i. vis.i.. visi... visib.. visibl. visible f.... visible

fi.. visible fir. visible fire .ire ..re ...e .... 1. The active principle operative in combustion; popularly conceived as a substance visible in the form of a flame or of ruddy glow or incandescence. [....]12. Fever, inflammation; disease as a consuming agency ME. 13. fig. (sense 1). a. Ardour of passion, esp. of love or rage ME. b. Ardour of temperament; courage, zeal, enthusiasm, spirit. [....] 2. Table [- L. tabula plank, tablet, list ....] I. A flat slab or board. [....] 2. spec. a. A tablet bearing or intended for an inscription or device. [....] †3. A board or other flat surface on which a picture is painted; hence the picture itself - 1700. [....] II. A raised board at which persons may sit. 1. An article of furniture consisting of a flat top [...] and used to place things on for various purpose, as for meals, for some work or occupation, or for ornament. [....] Tabulary [- L. tabularium record-office, archives. f. tabula TABLE] [...] A place where the public records were kept [....] ric allsopp b c d e f g h i j k l m n o physical data e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z a b c d e f g h i j k l m normal heart rate: 84 beats per minute o p q r s t u v w x y z a blood pressure: 150/80 mmHg c d e f g height: 1.70 metres i j k l m n o p q r s t u v weight:74.7 kilograms x y z a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r skinfold measurement: tricep:12 mm u v w x y z a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r subscapular: 20.2 mm t u v w x y z a bicep: 6.2 mm c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r suprilliac: 16.2 mm total: 54.6 mm u v w x y z a b c d e figure measurement: g h i j k l m n o p q r shoulders: 115 cm t u v w x y z a b chest: 98 cm d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v waist: 93 cm x y z a b c d e f g hips: 101 cm ric allsopp b c d e f g h i j k l m n o physical data e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z a b c d e f g h i j k l m normal heart rate: 84 beats per minute o p q r s t u v w x y z a blood pressure: 150/80 mmHg c d e f g height:1.70 metres i j k l m n o p q r s t u v weight:74.7 kilograms x y z a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r skinfold measurement: tricep:12 mm u v w x y z a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r subscapular: 20.2 mm t u v w x y z a bicep: 6.2 mm c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r suprilliac: 16.2 mm total: 54.6 mm u v w x y z a b c d e figure measurement: g h i j k l m n o p q r shoulders: 115 cm t u v w x y z a b chest 98 cm d e f g

Language aLive (3) Lowestoft: Sound & Language (2000)

h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v waist: 93 cm x y z a b c d e f g hips: 101 cm memory erased memory erased

memory erased

keep your lips still keep your eyes still keep your lips still keep your eyes still keep your lips still keep

your eyes still keep your lips still keep your eyes still keep your lips still keep your eyes still keep your

lips still keep your eyes still keep your lips still keep your eyes still keep your lips still keep your eyes

still storage is externalised keep your lips still keep your eyes still keep your lips still storage is

externalised keep your eyes still keep your lips still keep your eyes still keep your lips still keep your

eyes still keep your lips still keep your eyes

still

keep your lips still keep your eyes still

still

still

b....... b....... b....... b....... b....... b.c..... b.c..... b.c..... b.c..... b.c..... b.c..... b.c..... b.c..... b.co.... b.co....

b.co.... b.co.... b.co.... b.co.... b.co.... b.co..n. b.co..n. b.co..n. b.co..n. b.co..n. b.co..n. b.co..n. beco..n.

beco..n. beco..n. beco..n. beco..n. beco..n. beco..n. beco..ng beco..ng beco..ng beco..ng beco..ng

beco..ng beco..ng beco.ing beco.ing beco.ing beco.ing beco.ing beco.ing beco.ing becoming becoming

becoming becoming becoming becoming becoming ..v....... ..v....... ..v....... ..v....... ..v....... ..v....... ..v.......

..vi....... ..vi..... ..vi..... ..vi..... ..vi..... ..vi..... ..vi..... ..vi.i... ..vi.i... ..vi.i... ..vi.i... ..vi.i... ..vi.i... ..vi.i... ..vi.ib..

..vi.ib.. ..vi.ib.. ..vi.ib.. ..vi.ib.. ..vi.ib.. ..vi.ib.. .nvi.ib.. .nvi.ib.. .nvi.ib.. .nvi.ib.. .nvi.ib.. .nvi.ib.. .nvi.ib..

.nvi.ib.e .nvi.ib.e .nvi.ib.e .nvi.ib.e .nvi.ib.e .nvi.ib.e .nvi.ib.e .nvisib.e .nvisib.e .nvisib.e .nvisib.e .nvisib.e

.nvisib.e .nvisib.e invisib.e invisib.e invisib.e invisib.e invisib.e invisib.e invisib.e invisible invisible

Language aLive (3) Lowestoft: Sound & Language (2000)

fire under fire on fire under fire on fire under fire on fire under fire on fire under fire on fire under fire

on fire under fire on fire under fire on fire under fire on fire under fire on fire under fire on fire under

fire on fire under fire on fire under fire on fire under fire on fire under fire on fire under fire on fire

under fire on fire under fire on fire under fire on fire under fire on fire under fire between the eye and

its object? between hand and mouth? between an action and its consequence? between a kiss and a

betrayal? between touch and remembering? between a footfall and fear? between a knock and

silence? between writing and its inscription? between the table and the chair?

Keep the eye still. The tongue silent. The ear closed. The lips sealed. The wing clipped.

The writing is on the screen.

Oxidation of writing.

letters burned burned burned burned buried buried burned banned banned banned banned burned

buried on the skin tongue fire eye mouth lips oxidation of writing, swollen letters crumble like memory

swollen letters crumble like memory swollen letters crumble like memory swollen letters crumble like

memory swollen letters crumble like memory swollen letters crumble like memory swollen letters

crumble like memory swollen letters crumble like memory swollen letters crumble like memory swollen

letters oxidation of writing crumble like memory swollen letters crumble like memory

letters burned on the skin

oxidation of writing

oxid.tion of writing oxid.tion of writing oxid.tion of writing oxid.tion of writing ox.d.t.on of wr.t.ng

ox.d.t.on of wr.t.ng ox.d.t.on of wr.t.ng ox.d.t.on of wr.t.ng ox.d.t.on of wr.t.ng ox.d.t.on of wr.t.ng

ox.d.t.on of wr.t.ng ox.d.t.on of wr.t.ng ox.d.t.on of wr.t.ng x.d.t..n .f wr.t.ng .x.d.t..n .f wr.t.ng x.d.t..n .f

wr.t.ng .x.d.t..n .f wr.t.ng .x.d.t..n .f wr.t.ng .x.d.t..n .f wr.t.ng .x.d.t..n .f wr.t.ng .x.d.t..n .f wr.t.ng .x.d.t..n

.f wr.t.ng .x.d.t..n .f wr.t.ng x.d.t..n .f wr.t.ng .x.d.t..n .f wr.t.ng x.d.t.. .f wr.t..g .x.d.t.. .f wr.t..g .x.d.t..

.f wr.t..g .x.d..... .f wr....g .x.d..... .f wr....g .x.d..... .f wr....g .x.d..... .f wr....g .x.d..... .f wr....g .x.d..... .f

wr....g .x.d..... .f wr....g .x.d..... .f wr....g .x.d..... .f wr....g .x.d..... .f wr....g .x.d..... .f wr....g .x.d..... .f

wr....g .x.d..... .f wr....g .x.d..... .f wr....g .x.d..... .f wr....g .x.d..... .f wr....g .x.d..... .f wr....g .x.d..... .f

w.....g .x.d..... .f w.....g .x.d..... .f w.....g .x.d..... .f w.....g .x.d..... .f w.....g .x.d..... .f w.....g .x.d..... .f w.....g

.x.d..... .f w.....g .x.d..... .f w.....g .x.d..... .f w.....g ...d..... .f w.....g ...d..... .f w.....g ...d..... .f w....g ...d..... .f

w.....g ...d..... .f

w.....g ...d..... .f w.....g ...d..... .f w.....g ...d..... .f w.....g ...d..... .f w.....g ...d..... .f w.....g ...d..... .f w.....g

...d..... .f w.....g ...d..... .f w.....g ...d..... .f w.....g w.....g w.....g w.....g w.....g w.....g wo....g wo....g wo....g

wo....g wo....g wo....g wo....g wor...g wor...g wor...g wor...g wor...g wor...g wor...g wor...g

wor..ng wor..ng wor..ng wor..ng wor..ng wor..ng wor..ng wor..ng wor..ng wor..ng wor.ing wor.ing

wor.ing wor.ing wor.ing wor.ing wor.ing wor.ing wor.ing wor.ing wording wording wording wording wording

wording. Keep the mouth still. The tongue silent. The ear closed. The lips sealed. Keep the mouth still.

The tongue silent. The ear closed. The lips sealed. Keep the mouth still. The tongue silent. The ear closed.

The lips sealed.

The writing is on the screen.

a print-room. a concrete floor painted grey-blue.
large sliding windows all along one side. white flaking
plaster walls. an enamelled sink. a doorway at one
end. a large wooden table. three glasses. a desk-light.
a wooden stool. a stack of white paper. a dip-pen and
a bottle of red liquid with a dropper. a metal flask. a
small metal rod. a box of matches. a glass jug full of
clear liquid. a tape recorder. a 2 meter long metal
gutter suspended 1 meter from the floor. the gutter is
filled with clear liquid. a sheet of tempered steel with
23 wine glasses filled with clear liquid. an almost life-
size photograph of a naked man. his torso is obscured
by a metal sheet. a monitor standing on a pedestal 1.5
meters high. smell of methylates, oils and isopropylates

Language aLive (3) Lowestoft: Sound & Language (2000)

Fir.-r.Lrd.nt ch.mic.ls function by th.ir .bility to "so.k up" r.dic.ls, thus t.rmin.ting th. ch.in r..ction. .xtr.m.ly r.pid combustion is c.ll.d .n .xplosion. This can occur if th. production of r.dic.ls gr..tly .xc..ds th. r.t. of ch.in t.rmin.tion, or if h..t buildup is gr..t .nough to .cc.l.r.t. th. r..ctions of v.ry r.pid r.t.s.[....]12. F.v.r, infl.mm.tion; dis..s. .s . consuming .g.ncy M.. 13. fig. (s.ns. 1). .. .rdour of p.ssion, .sp. of lov. or r.g. M.. b. .rdour of t.mp.r.m.nt; cour.g., z..l, .nthusi.sm, spirit. [....] th. sound.d word is .n .ction which f.st dis.pp..rs 2. Tabl. [- L. tabula plank, tabl.t, list ....] I. A flat slab or board. [....] 2. sp.c. a. A tabl.t b.aring or int.nd.d for an inscription or d.vice. [....] †3. A board or other flat surface on which a picture is painted; hence the picture itself - 1700. [....] still keep still keep still keep still keep still keep II. A raised board at which persons may sit. 1. An article of furniture consisting of a flat top [...] and used to place things on for various purpose, as for meals, for some work or occupation, or for ornament. [....] Tabulary [- L. tabularium record-office, archives, f. tabula TABLE] [...] A place where the public records were kept

T A B L E

[END]

* This performance text should be read at 451 words per minute.

Fire Table XII was performed by Ric Allsopp for 'Crossing Time' at Dartington Arts Gallery, Devon, UK on 27 February 1998 as part of a continuing series (1989 - 1999) of live performance/ imstallations involving fire as a metaphoric and actual material.

(2000)

'Circulate II'

In

Inner Spaces, ed. Tomek Wendland

Posnan: Inner Spaces Multimedia

[pp. 188 - 191 following are un-numbered]

circulate II

LOST: a square wooden table placed near a wall in the centre of the gallery, a chair, on the table a parcel wrapped with brown paper and string, a pen, three small bottles with droppers, a box of matches, a low metal tripod, a metal bowl, an aluminium handle, a block of beeswax, a bottle of isopropyl alcohol, three small glass bowls, a candle, a metal spirit stove, a pair of tweezers, a pocket knife.

A B **C IRCULATE II** D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z **ARCHIVE** B C D E F G H I J K L M N O **PHYS-ICAL DATA** E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z A B C D E F G H I J K L M **NORMAL HEART RATE: 84 BEATS PER MINUTE** O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z A **BLOOD PRESSURE: 150/80 MM HG** C D E F G **HEIGHT: 1.70 METRES** I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V **WEIGHT:74.7 KILOGRAMS** X Y Z A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R **SKINFOLD MEASUREMENT: TRICEP:12 MM** U V W X Y Z A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R **SUBSCAPULAR: 20.2 MM** T U V W X Y Z A **BICEP: 6.2 MM** C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R **SUPRILLIAC: 16.2 MM TOTAL: 54.6 MM** U V W X Y Z A B C D E **FIGURE MEASUREMENT:** G H I J K L M N O P Q R **SHOULDERS: 115 CM** T U V W X Y Z A B **CHEST: 98 CM** D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V **WAIST: 93 CM** X Y Z A B C D E F G **HIPS: 101 CM ARCHIVE** B C D E F G H I J K L M N O **PHYSICAL DATA** E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z A B C D E F G H I J K L M **NORMAL HEART RATE: 84 BEATS PER MINUTE** O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z A **BLOOD PRESSURE: 150/80 MMHG** C D E F G **HEIGHT:1.70 METRES** I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V **WEIGHT:74.7 KILOGRAMS** X Y Z A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R **SKINFOLD MEASUREMENT: TRICEP:12 MM** U V W X Y Z A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R **SUBSCAPULAR: 20.2 MM** T U V W X Y Z A **BICEP: 6.2 MM** C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R **SUPRILLIAC: 16.2 MM TOTAL: 54.6 MM** U V W X Y Z A B C D E **FIGURE MEASUREMENT:** G H I J K L M N O P Q R **SHOULDERS: 115 CM** T U V W X Y Z A B **CHEST: 98 CM** D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V **WAIST: 93 CM** X Y Z A B C D E F G **HIPS: 101 CM.**

circulate II

ands like clo|ds or jewels| the sea bel
ence o| |artme| |ly tap| |a
artme| |blue s| |a| the
nd w| |w| bac| |th| tho
not| |he| He| |ec|the| |en
ice| |n sh| ha| |d, th| sp| f bl
of | |mpi| or| |faint|ng| |g tast
d t| |ell her| |hat| |[...] h| r, b| |he was
s afr|id of it| imp|cations,|ts fl|p-side, i
mal|attracti|n, a |mingling|of tastes, the
There was s|mething bey|nd this - som

they ha| sp|ken to e|ch o|her abo|t w
laying| |it| r at th| |e| end o| r
, the | |a|d noi| |e|el of | |ar
on th| |ili|y of a| |ua|e he| |ot
nte| |ee| er c| |ne| he| |g a
o n| |is b|dy,| |el [.|] o| |ing
ed | |orts o| em| |ns in | im| |ch b
n't s|p think|ng a|out the|way|er [...]
nbe|ed the s|reng|h of her|hand|as she
He|thought| bout the ma|y things the
er, |he phot|graphs of he| as a|child. Th

e wanted to tell her that |
her dark hair, her eyes, her |
on of feeling, of un|
remembered |
ning. He could re|
|ng at the doorway of the club on the |
|that he would never be a part of - a wo
|ary of a place they were both exiled
| he wanted to |g|t with her, he wanted her
| in the palm of his hand. |ed that she
|h him, to alter the climate of his body. He
| his as they lay in bed together. He
|uilt on the wooden floor of her
|s of her father in his unifor
|encil and later the words

Section 5

Documentation

(1996)

'Interiors - Exteriors - Turnarounds'

in

Funkenklänge und Wasserzeichen, ed. K-O. Kahrmann,

Keil: LAG, pp.149 -154

ISBN 3 -9802588 -5 -8

Interiors - Exteriors - Turn-Arounds

Ric Allsopp

Imagination is always considered to be the faculty of forming images.
But it is rather the faculty of deforming the images offered by
perception, of freeing ourselves from the immediate images: it is
especially the faculty of changing images. (Gaston Bachelard)

1. Description:

The Theatre Workshop was made in two parts with 14 participants from Germany, Poland and

Lithuania. Part 1 (Days 1-4) was concerned with generating material and providing exercises and

models of processes that lead to performance. Part II (Days 5-8) was concerned with making two

linked performance/ installations, one interior and one exterior.

Day I:

Bodywork:

A sequence of stretches/ isolations based in Release Technique combined with walking/ running

and spatial awareness exercises. The body in relation to itself and the space/ time it occupies.

Image I - Journey:

Making an individual representation in 2-dimensions of the journey to Scheersberg using paper,

colour, found objects. In pairs extending this individual representation/ map/ trace through

speech - not describing what is already present, but extending it in other ways.

Image II - Home:

Making a individual representation (ideal/ symbolic/ literal) in 3-dimensions of Home, using card,

string, paper, wood, colour, found objects etc.. In pairs extending this image through speech.

Finding a Site:

In small groups (3-4) finding an (exterior) site in which to make an action with object (the 3-D

representation of home).Considering edges, corners, openings, voids etc.

Making a Action:

To make a short simple action involving the object a) in relation to site; b) in relation to other objects; and c) in relation to performer. For example the object might be placed, suspended, ignited, flown, eaten, buried, given, etc.

Day II:

Bodywork:

Sequence of stretches/ isolations as Day I: rolling, crawling, standing, walking, running: spatial awareness (speed, dynamic, edges, centre, gaps, openings); the body in relation to others in time/ space: sensation and the back - 'grandma's footsteps' - vulnerability (individual/ group).

Image III - Fear:

Making a individual representation (symbol/ container) in 3-dimensions for Fear using card, string, paper, wood, colour, found objects etc.. In pairs/ groups extending this image through speech. The object as focus of attraction/ mediator of meanings.

Working with Objects:

Find a place/ site for the object (interior).

Find individual action in relation to your object.

Consider where the action begins and where it ends - what is its shape and detail .

Try to repeat the action.

Enlarge the action in space/ time/ dynamic/ gesture/ movement

Reduce the action to its essential elements

Remove the object and repeat the action.

In pairs teach your action(s) to each other - this makes you think about what is

essential.

Learn the combinations (AA-BB, AB-BA etc.)

Making an Action (Collage):

In 3-4 pairs (half the group) show actions simultaneously. Repeat considering listening to time/ timing - the relationship of everything that is happening within the action. When to make a move, to begin, to stop, to pause etc. Returning to the memory/ experience of the object, let

this inform your actions. The way in which actions// objects fill with and empty themselves of meaning.

Dias/ Slides:

Selection of 37 dias/ slides on the Western European representation of landscape; Land Art, representations of home and body; UK performance/ installations with commentary and questions.

Day III:

Bodywork:

Sequence of stretches/ isolations as Day I: rolling, crawling, standing, walking, running: spatial awareness (speed, dynamic, loss of balance/ control, circling); the body in contact/ touch with others. Interactions based on touch - release of tension/ giving weight.

Simple Actions:

In pairs working with simple actions: for example dancing, washing, embracing, carrying. Two individuals standing apart in space; they turn/ move and meet in a simple action/ interaction; they part. Consider entrances and exits - where the action begins, where it ends, how it meets with another. The central idea here is to try and focus on the simplicity of the present moment, the action of doing something in the present (giving, taking, touching), rather than 'acting out' an image of the present moment - the thing itself rather than the thought about the thing. As with Day II - repeat, extend, enlarge/ reduce the actions; learn combinations: show in pairs.

Image IV - Pathways:

Extending the image of 'journey': In small groups find an exterior site and make a clear pathway for an audience that leads over/ across a boundary/ threshold and changes in some way (for example the pathway might lead from an enclosed landscape to an open one; from flat to hilly; from light to dark; from outside to inside etc.). The morning's 'simple actions' should be used in relation to the pathway. The image of a journey to another world.

Making an Action:

An audience is lead (in various ways) along a pathway. A beginning - a change - an end. Questions arise - how is the spectator supported - coaxed/ embraced/ coerced/ mislead/

celebrated? How is the space of performance (and thus the audience's vision) structured? What images are presented to the audience and how? The 'pathways' exercise provides stimulus for discussion and feedback.

Day IV:

Bodywork:

Sequence of stretches/ isolations as Day I: rolling, crawling, standing, walking, running: spatial awareness (speed, dynamic, loss of balance/ control, circling), tag & group tag; the body in contact/ touch with another - taking/ giving responsibility. These 'trust' exercises in pairs responded to the Day III discussion on 'audience' and pathways: With a partner - a) one person on the floor (eyes shut) being moved/ pulled through space; b) lifting person on floor to standing - this is a literal problem of shifting weight; c) person standing falling backwards / forwards - catching/ supporting weight; d) leading standing person through space - different dynamics). The partner then swap roles and repeat. Discussion of imagery involved - considering actual situations in which this type of interaction is seen.

Simple Actions:

Developing Day III's work with emphasis on carrying/ taking weight: trying to (re)find the physical immediacy of the tasks undertaken above (lifting/ carrying/ catching) in a more formalised/ prepared performance situation. Trying to form/ give shape to a simple performance action by moving from action to image rather than finding the physical description of an image. The relationship of risk and control. Introducing interruptions/ obstacle/ repetitions in the actions.

Image V - Pathways:

Repeating Day III's assignment and building on experience and additional work on 'trust' and 'simple action'. To extend the possibilities for imagery and relationship to audience. Emphasis on the moment of transformation/ change within each piece.

Making an Action:

An audience is lead (in various ways) along a pathway. A beginning - a change - an end. The elements of the piece begin to shift - different solutions to the problems of choice of space, use of objects, treatment of audience, use of action etc. emerge. The evening is spent reviewing the

197

first four days work and proposing a framework for building a performance during second four-day period.

Days V- VII.

Part 2 of the workshop consisted in developing the following elements towards two linked performance installations. The days were less formally structured as the shape and dynamic of the performances became clearer and started to determine what needed to be done.

Materials:

To work with 'natural' elements and their transformations: the body/ fire/ ice/ salt/ steel/ wood/ light (artificial/ natural)/ interior space, exterior space, ambient sound.

Bodywork:

Each day started with a sequence of stretches/ isolations as Days I-IV: rolling, crawling, standing, walking, running: spatial awareness (speed, dynamic, loss of balance/ control, circling); the body as individual; in relation to others etc.

Portraits:

Exploring the ways in which an image/ action takes up meanings - the process of 'thickening towards image' - the relation between a physical action and a verbal/ written caption: task - a) to write a caption beginning 'I am ...' or 'A man/ woman who ...'; b) to find an action or photographic pose that extends/ contradicts/ subverts the meaning of the caption.. The idea here is to move beyond the descriptive, the first idea, the familiar relationship between what is seen and what is 'said' - towards making the familiar unfamiliar.

Group Work:

This work extends the individual/ paired attentions of bodywork into group work: the group as both a collection of individuals and as a single 'organism'. It also starts to deal with the discrepancies between the experience of the performer in making an action/ image and the experience of the audience 'reading' the action/ image. Using 9 performers seated close together on stools in a square formation: for example a sequence of actions - a) 'emptiness' -the individual involved with his/ her own sensations; b) awareness of others - using eyes, heads to make contact with others; c) touching others using heads/ hands; d) passing a glass of water through the

group - trying to sense the group as a whole; e) speaking memories, trains of thought prompted
by sensation of drinking water; f) speaking to others or to audience; g) eating a piece of fruit; h)
standing, sitting, leaving the square or returning to the square; i) returning to emptiness etc.
The main idea here is to sense the dynamic of the individual/ group as it moves and develops
through time; to work towards a collective image that is determined by a simple set of
instructions/ actions; to be both inside and outside the action at the same time - a kind of
'double inscription' - to feel what is happening within the group and to give it shape and
dynamic as performance image - eg. how do you decide when to move, to speak, to stand, to exit
etc. - the relationship between individual and collective action.

Simple Actions - Pairs:

Working on simple actions in pairs and developing these into a series of repeatable and
formalised images in relation to a built object/ structure ('spirit houses').This develops the
technique of
collage/ montage composition - placing materials in relationship to one another (actions/
objects) to see what images begin to take shape.

Spirit Houses:

Extending the images of 'home' a number of 'spirit houses' were build, each free standing on
four 2 metre bamboo legs. The intention here was for each pair of performers to make a
representation that could in some way contain hopes, fears, aspirations, doubts and that
could be seen in relation to 'simple actions'.

Pathways:

Exterior: constructing a pathway of cut wood that leads the audience to the site of the 'spirit
houses'. Interior: constructing a pathway of salt connecting the various formal elements used.

Day VIII: Performance.

Interior: (9.30-10.15 pm)

The audience (in groups of 20 for 5-10 minutes) was invited to see three types of process: a
'natural' process (ice converting to steam); a behavioural process (a group of 12 people
negotiating a set of performance rules); a metaphor or image of process (a pathway of salt). A
darkened room. Three square steel plates raised slightly above a wooden floor and connected by

a line of salt. The first plate is lit from underneath. The line of salt crossing its surface pours from/ or into a drinking glass. Above the second plate hangs a block of ice, lit from above, in which are frozen signs of human presence. It melts onto the steel plate which is heated by fire from underneath. The water boils off into steam. The salt line passes underneath the plate which is surrounded with drinking glasses. The third plate, lit from above, holds a ripped burlap sack from/ into which the line of salt pours. Near the block of ice, in a corner of the darkened room, sit 12 people on stools (four rows of three). They are still, they talk, they touch each other, they stand, they exit through a doorway in the corner behind them from which comes a bright glowing light. They eat, they talk, they are still.

Exterior: (10.30-10.45 pm)

At dusk a pathway of cut wood leads to a flat grassy area backed with linden trees. Six 'spirit houses' stand supported by bamboo poles. Couples appear at different times from different directions. They stand near their 'houses'. They move towards each other, taking each other in a dance step, a lift, an embrace, striking each other, breaking away, back to stillness. One by one the 'spirit houses' are set on fire whilst couples dance, embrace, fight, argue, hate, care for each other. The couples disappear - the houses smoulder in the growing darkness.

2. Comment:

From my point of view the workshop set out to do two things: to examine a) some processes of making performance (a live interactive event) and b) ways in which an audience's vision can be structured by performance. Some of the main approaches taken to try and achieve this were as follows:

> To enable people to work with
> - the details of what is there, the material to hand, rather than with abstractions, with already formed images
> - the 'action' of doing something in performance circumstances rather than 'acting'
> - the traces and images that such action generates

- attention to physical presence, to object and to site
- the possibility of 'magical operations' - that imaginal/ physical actions can be causal but not necessarily logical in their effect, can begin to realise the 'unseen', the 'unspoken'
- compositional strategies that allows material to move towards form rather than be determined by structure
- an attention, a movement that goes from idea to action/ from body to image
- the possibility of using creative means to re-enchant/ re-claim the alienated realities that surround us

What is important is trying to make something together, a 'something' that in this instance might be called performance - that involves the creative efforts of a group of people in a particular time and place - that invokes something that cannot be totally predicted in advance - that in some sense or other is given its own life, a 'life' that can and does provides an imaginative and regenerative energy for people involved (as spectators/ participants or performers); a 'life' that is not entirely divorced from larger cultural, social, political, or environmental realities.

The first problem that such a workshop encounters is one of nomination - what is this work? Expectations are set up by the word 'theatre' - a sense that we might know in advance what 'theatre' is, even what a 'theatre workshop' is, what kind of strategies, approaches it might employ, what kind of vocabulary, what range of references are going to be used, and already therefore, that we might be missing the moment of 'theatre', the moment of vision. It is difficult to generalise about these expectations. The workshop was not primarily concerned with skills associated with 'drama' - skills of acting, of 'restored behaviour', with the playing out of roles, the re-presentation of familiar narrative or image fragments determined by culturally conditioned views of what constitutes 'drama' or 'theatre'. The broader problems of making performance - what is it that we are doing, who is it for, how does an image take form - are never far from the surface.

The workshop was centrally concerned with the experience of the moment, in what is happening as people come together physically, imaginatively, socially, as individuals or as groups, to do something, to make performance images together. The workshop 'described' above always resists description in the sense that much of its activity is happening as a live event, the thing itself, rather than a reflection about, a description of, the thing. For example, asking a person to lift another person from the floor is an instruction that is easily grasped in the mind. As an action that engages you in the present problem of how it is done, or indeed what it might begin to mean for someone watching, it is something that requires a different set of 'understandings' to realise the instruction. Or for example, extending the image of 'home' out of yourself, into a collective, public space, also requires a shifted set of attentions. It is this different set of 'understandings' - this shift in attention, an ability to engage with what is in front of us, that is important.

The insistence on an attention to the 'dimension of the present moment' (as Miroslav Holub calls it) - at least as an approach to making performance - finds an expression in the way that materials as well as 'time' are used - salt, metal, fire etc. This is not a reductivist approach to 'things as they are', or a belief in some 'absolute' nature or quality, but rather a recognition that 'things as they are' (simple actions, materials) are already complex enough without the imposition or overlay of additional meanings. Octavio Paz, with reference to the work of Duchamp, describes the art work as a 'machine for producing meanings'. In trying to strip away assumptions, expectations, conditioned responses in order to arrive at the material itself, we hope to arrive at where the work begins; letting things speak for themselves, find their own life, and engage in the inherent emptying and filling of meaning.

Such a workshop can only bring performance material to a point of contact - things are put in relationship, images are starting to occur, to deepen, but the broader sense of (radical) coherence or 'living connections' is only hinted at. Thus any 'performance' will be pitched at this point of first recognition of material - essaying: trying things out to see how they/ if they fit. The 'life' that begins to inhabit the reality that is formed between the intention of the performance maker(s) and the perception of the spectator(s) - what Marcel Duchamp refers to as

the 'difference' that is the work itself - makes its first meanings here.

As a workshop leader the hardest aspect is balancing the individual desires and enthusiasms of participants (coming from all sorts of different experiences and backgrounds), with an element of direction. It is my belief that the best learning about performance and how it is made occurs in the moment of performance - and that to provide an experience of performance is valuable because of this; but that this approach (in such a time scale) will always involve a level of imposition of ideas from the leader.

I am grateful for the opportunity to work in Scheersberg, not only as a means for extending and broadening my own work, but as an opportunity to see this work in relation to other approaches within an international perspective; to be able learn from the practice and cultural view point of others, both participants and leaders. Support for art work as a form of gift-giving, of imaginative exchange (particularly in 'live' media) is particularly important in a cultural atmosphere dominated by consumerism and materialist values. Art work provides us with a means of re-imagining and re-forming our individual and collective futures that can be freed from conventional expectations and values. The opportunities to engage as participants (rather than as consumers) in this type of work are increasingly few. Scheersberg provides an ideal setting and an administrative structure that enables creative work to happen in a relaxed and effective atmosphere. The work and the involvement of participants from many countries and many backgrounds does not only begin and end in the relative isolation and intensity of Scheersberg. It is precisely this concentration, this focus, which gives a 'life' to creative work, an energy that enables it to return to the cities, to disseminate itself, into other, perhaps more demanding situations, to find appropriate forms for giving shape to the future.

Art exists to help us to recover the sensation of life, to make the stone
stony. The end of art is to give a sensation of the object as seen, not
as recognised. The technique of art is to make things 'unfamiliar', to
make forms obscure, so as to increase the difficulty and the duration
of perception. The act of perception in art is an end in itself and must
be prolonged. In art, it is our experience of the process of
construction that counts, not the finished product.
(Viktor Schklovsky)

✦✦✦✦✦✦✦

Acts of Writing:

Writings on Contemporary Performance

By

RIC ALLSOPP

Addendum

Copies of Original Publications 1992 – 2000

Addendum to Thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth

In partial fulfillment of the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By Staff Candidature on the basis of Published Works

Dartington College of Arts

July 2000

Addendum

List of Contents:

Section 1

Essays and Papers

(1994)

'Creativity Has No Frontiers'

INSEA News , No.1 ed. Wieslaw Karolak

Lodz: INSEA, pp.6-11

'City Tree' - photo © Flo Fox, 1983 (detail)

Wykład wygłoszony podczas seminarium:
„Twórczość nie ma granic" *Łódź, listopad 1993*

Seminar Paper:
„Creativity Has No Frontiers" *Lodz, Poland · Nov.1993*

Ric

Allsop

1.

Linie tworzące zaprezentowany obraz („Drzewo w mieście" - Flo Fox, 1983) wchodzą w określoną ilość możliwych związków i interpretacji zachodzących między koncepcjami podziału i integracji: dla przykładu, linie te odczytywać można jako siły uwalniające podział spod przytłaczającej hierarchicznej kontroli, które rozrywają przestarzałe struktury i przekraczają formalne bariery hamujące działanie sił twórczych. Obraz ten mógłby stać się wizerunkiem rewolucji dokonujących się w Europie Wschodniej w części spowodowanych opozycyjną działalnością artystów i ludzi teatru. Linie te odczytywać można także jako sposób uzdrawiania i integracji, jako siły tworzące, „żywe łączniki"na gruzach podzielonego świata - na przykład wydarzenia kulturalne organizowane są w Sarajewie, gdzie odczuwa się potrzebę „działań magicznych" na równi z koniecznością racjonalnej pomocy w szczególnych warunkach, które, zdawałoby się, spychają działania estetyczne na margines.

Jednak nie znaczenie „Drzewa w mieście" interesuje mnie w sposób szczególny, gdyż obraz ten znajdzie swoje odniesienie do wielu kontekstów znaczeniowych. Frapuje raczej kwestia jak stworzyć obraz wyrażający nasze czasy i okoliczności socjo-kulturowe.

Utopijny idealizm Władysława Strzemińskiego wyrażający się formułą, że „celem sztuki jest jedność kompozycji"lub też parafrazą Gregory Bateson'a o „wzorze, który łączy" - z trudem trafia do naszej wyobraźni poruszającej się w obrębie systemów estetyki arystotelesowskiej i kegejskiej w warunkach, które pozbawiły nas oparcia w pewnikach politycznych, socjologicznych, ekonomicznych i religijnych.

2

Ten podział najlepiej charakteryzuje postmodernistyczne warunki epoki postindustrialnej, w której żyjemy. Odnosi się on zarówno do tradycyjnej materii sfery estetyki, jak i do szerszych obszarów polityki, kultury i życia społecznego. Zburzenie barier, granic politycznych, autorytetów świata kultury, teatralność i udramatyzowanie codziennego życia szczególnie widoczne w konsumpcyjnych społeczeństwach Zachodu, problemy tożsamości kulturowej i jednostkowej, nacjonalizmy i subiektywizm - to znaki i symptomy uznawane za normy życia pod koniec 20 wieku. Aby odnaleźć sens - jeśli to w ogóle możliwe - musimy poszukiwać nowych form współzależności nie odwołujących się do modeli historycznych i kulturowych zaczerpniętych z minionych dwóch tysięcy lat - owego „śmietnika historii", który zawiódł nas - aby osiągnąć nowy sens obranego kierunku i integracji. Na przestrzeni ostatnich 25 lat wiele form sztuk plastycznych zwraca się ku teatrowi i performance jako środkom radykalnego przedstawienia zwartego czy „jednolitego" obiektu sztuki. Od początku lat 1960-tych nasilające się usuwanie w cień obiektów sztuki i ich stopniowy zanik pozostawił tylko ślady, plamy, pęknięcia na tym, co wydawało się być zwartą materią społeczną, kulturową i estetyczną.

Muzea, galerie czyli tradycyjne skupiska dzieł sztuki światowej koncentrują naszą uwagę na strukturach i kontekstach budowli, w których gromadzi się sztukę, a nie na niej samej. Narożniki pełne tłuszczu, walający się na podłogach ryż, podziurawione ściany pokryte śladami rąk, drzwi zabite deskami, okna z szybami-zwierciadłami. Gdy tylko obiekt sztuki zdematerializuje się i zniknie z jednego znajomego miejsca, wydaje się pojawiać ponownie ze świeżymi pęknięciami i uszkodzeniami w warstwie kulturowej - źródło nieskończonej inwencji i przystosowania się.

1.

The lines that form this image (City Tree - Flo Fox,1983) participate in a number of possible relationships and readings between ideas of fragmentation and of integration: for instance the lines may be read as forces that help to bring about the fragmentation of oppressive, hierarchical control - breaking up deadening structures, transgressing formal boundaries that limit creativity - the image could be an icon for the recent social and political revolutions in Eastern Europe brought about partially by the oppositional work of arists and theatre performers; at the same time the lines can be read as a means of healing and integration - forces that provide „living connections" between the rubble of the fragmented world - for example the recent materialisation of cultural events in Sarajevo that see the cultural necessity of „magical operations" alongside rational aid, in a context where aesthetic actions might be thought to be of marginal use.

What concerns me here is not so much what this City Tree image means - since it will participate in many meanings depending on context - but rather, how to make images that speak for our own time, and cultural and social circumstances. Wladyslaw Strzeminski's utopian idealism - that „the aim of art is unity of composition" the „pattern that connects" as Gregory Bateson puts it - is hard to imagine as we find ourselves shifting from Aristotelian to Cagean aesthetics in a context where political, social, economic or religious certainties are no longer with us.

2.

It is fragmentation that best characterises the post-modern, post-industrial condition that we live in. A fragmentation that ruptures the traditional fabric of the aesthetic sphere as much as it is evident in wider social, political, economic and cultural realms. The shattering of boundaries, political frontiers, cultural certainties; the breaking of the pictorial frame, the traditional site of the art object; the theatricality and dramatisation of everyday life especially in the consumer cultures of the West; problems of cultural identity, nationalism, the identity of the self, subjectivity - all these signs and symptoms point to a condition of late 20th century life that coming normative. To make sense of this - if it is still possible to think in such terms - we have to seek new forms of radical coherence that no longer turn to exemplary historical and cultural models of the past two thousand years - the „junk of history" that has failed us - for a new sense of direction and integration.

In the last twenty five years many forms of visual art have turned towards the processes of theatre and performance as a means of radically reconceiving the self-contained or „unitary" art object. Since the 1960»s the increasing effacement of the art object and its gradual disappearance has left only traces, stains and fissures in what seemed to be a coherent social, cultural and aesthetic fabric.

Museums and galleries, traditional sites of the art world, increasingly bring our attention to the structures and contexts of the edifice that houses art itself, rather than to the objects displayed within - corners filled with fat, floors covered in rice, walls covered in hand-prints or broken through, doors boarded up, windows mirrored. As fast as the art object de-materialises and disappears from one familiar site so it seems to reappear again in other newer cracks and lesions in the cultural fabric - infinitely adaptable and resourceful.

I am pointing to a dialectic here - a continuous tension between fragmentation and integration, a tendency for the art

Odwołuję się w tym momencie do dialektyki - stałe napięcia między podziałem i jednością, skłonnością dzieła sztuki do oscylowania między tym, co autonomiczne i tym, co społeczne, napięcia rodzące możliwości - „nowej autentyczności", która obejmuje pojęcia połączonych i fragmentarycznych doświadczeń.

3.

Na napięcia te wskazał Charles Olson - pierwszy świadomie post-modernistyczny poeta amerykański. W latach 1950-tych napisał, że naszym zadaniem w próbie tworzenia „ludzkiego wszechświata" - czyli miejsca, w którym możemy mieszkać w przyjaznym i konstruktywnym związku z całą gamą procesów kulturowych i emocjonalnych kształtujących nas - jest „ spojrzeć na podzielony świat i odszukać żywą tkankę scalającą". Myśl ta stanowi kluczowy punkt odniesienia niniejszego referatu.

Jaki był zamysł Charles'a Olson'a? Z pewnością nie było jego zamiarem posklejanie pękniętej całości według racjonalistycznych, historycznych reguł czy zasad estetycznych, które, z perspektywy lat 1950-tych, wyraźnie zawiodły w tworzeniu ludzkiego wszechświata. Jego post-modernistyczne poglądy spowodowały, że zaczął poszukiwać radykalnej spoistości tam, gdzie dzieło sztuki (literackie, plastyczne, muzyczne czy performance) jest obiektem społecznym o wielorakich związkach podzielonych materiałów wiążących nas ze światem, i jednocześnie spełnia funkcje projekcyjne, integracyjne i krytyczne.

Choć „Drzewo w mieście" powstało w innym czasie i kontekście, stanowi ono dla mnie ilustrację imperatywu Olson'a i jako obraz „drzewa" mogłoby ukazać Władysławowi Strzemińskiemu to, czym sztuka nie jest, gdyż procesy kształtujące formę drzewa (rozmnażanie komórek, czynniki środowiskowe) nie znajdowały, według niego, swego miejsca w sztuce.

Jak przyjąłby muzykę John'a Cage'a, taniec Merce Cunningham czy Deborah Hay? Forma sztuki i obraz sztuki - pojęcia, do których będę wracać - nigdy nie istnieją poza innymi procesami życia, co Strzemiński wydawał się sugerować.

Choć uważam, że obraz żyje swoim życiem formowanym przez różne procesy, to owo „życie", jeśli można użyć tu takiego słowa, nigdy nie jest autonomiczne, podobnie jak jednostki nie można wyrwać z jej kontekstu kulturowego. Koncepcja racjonalistyczna spowodowała nasze oddzielenie od środowiska i nasz stosunek do własnego ciała - rozdział między ciałem i duchem, między poznaniem i czuciem. Zepchnęła na margines to, co magiczne, zbiorowe i poetyckie na rzecz tego, co racjonalne, indywidualne i prozaiczne.

Biblijną opowieść o „złotym cielcu" odnoszącą się do „bałwochwalstwa" odczytać można jako metaforę arogancji racjonalizmu uzurpującego sobie tworzenie rzeczy bez wpływu innych procesów - rzeczy rozumianych jako autonomiczne, istniejące same w sobie. Jest to granica, na której siła twórcza mogłaby zatrzymać się, zaś my zadalibyśmy następujące pytania: „Siła twórcza w służbie czego?" Czy „kreatywność" jest wolna od kontekstu? Odnoszę wrażenie, że może ona służyć zarówno materializmowi i destrukcji, jak i wzajemnej wymianie i integracji, zaś my musimy przejąć odpowiedzialność.

Jednak ten sposób myślenia mógłby już być uznany za przestarzały, szermujący starymi formami, dawnymi metaforami - kreatywności nie określa się ze względu na jej efekt końcowy, nie jest to kategoria bądź zamknięty proces oceniany według rezultatu, rozstrzygającego i jednolitego.

Proces twórczy nie jest już celowy bądź przyczynowy w rozumieniu arystotelesowskim lecz swawolny, pełen sprzeczności i niepewności, transformacyjny i generatywny - to „złoty cielec" przekształcony w proces alchemiczny.

4.

Linia tworząca przeciwstawność (według konstruktywi-

---

work to fluctuate between the autonomous and the social, a tension that provides the possibility of a „new authenticity" that embraces notions of integrated as well as fragmentary experience.

3.

This tension was pointed to by the poet Charles Olson - the first self-consciously post-modern American poet - when he wrote in the 1950»s that our task in attempting to create a „human universe" - a place where we can dwell in sympathetic and constructive relation to the range of cultural, environmental and affective processes that determine us - is „to take up the fragmented world, and find its living connections" and this provides a key reference point for this paper.

What did Charles Olson mean? He certainly had no interest in trying to stick things back together according to rationalist historical or aesthetic principles which had, from his 1950»s perspective, so obviously failed to provide a „human universe". His post-modern outlook pushed him to find a radical coherence where the art object (whether literary, visual, performative or musical) is both a social object - a complex relationship of fragmentary materials that involve us in the world - and performs at the same time an projective, integrative and critical function.

The „City Tree", though coming from a different context and time, provides me with a visualisation of Olson's imperative and, as a representation of „tree", might have provided Wladyslaw Strzeminski with a demonstration of what art is not, since the processes that give form to trees (cell division, environmental factors) for him had no place in art. What would he have made of the music of John Cage, the dances of Merce Cunningham or Deborah Hay? The form of art and the art image itself - which term I will return to - is never separated from other processes of life as Strzeminski seems to have suggested.

Whilst I believe that an image has life of its own, formed by varied processes, the „life", if we can call it that, can never be entirely autonomous, any more than individuals can be separated from their cultural context. The rationalist project has in many ways caused a separation from our environment, including our attitudes to our bodies - the division between body and mind, between the cognitive and the sensorial.

It has marginalised the magical, the collective and the poetic in favour of the rational, the individual and the prosaic.

The biblical narrative of „golden calf" which concerns the „worship of graven images" can be read as a metaphor for the rationalist arrogance that imagines we can create things that are not influenced by other processes - that are seen as autonomous, self-contained. This is a frontier that creativity might pause at, where we might ask the question of „creativity in service of what?" Is „creativity" free of contexts? It seems to me „creativity" can serve materialism and destruction, or mutual exchange and integration in equal parts and that this is a responsibility we have to accept.

But this might already be seen as old thinking, old forms, old metaphors - creativity can no longer defined by its end, by product; creativity is not a category, a finite process defined by its end, determinate and unified. The creative process, is simply that: a process - not purposeful or causal in a Aristotelian sense - but playful, contradictory, uncertain, transformative, generative - the „golden calf" become an alchemical process.

4.

The line that provides the opposition (in Strzeminski's constructivist thinking) between direction and dimension, and which he sought to renounce - along with rhythm - because of its divisive properties, in favour of „unism" has becomes in the post-modern aesthetic the space of enquiry, the locus of inve-

stycznej teorii Strzemińskiego) pomiędzy kierunkiem i wymiarem, którą - podobnie jak rytm - odrzucał ze względu na posiadane przez nią cechy powodujące podział, na rzecz unizmu, stała się w estetyce post-modernistycznej sferą badań, obszarem dociekań, miejscem gdzie to, co określam mianem „obrazu spektaklu" pozostawia ślad, zaznacza swoje istnienie.

Linia (w sposób metaforyczny widziana jako pęknięcie, rysa lub rozdarcie w materii kulturowo-estetycznej) staje się sferą rozpatrywania ulotnych, burzących aspektów wydarzenia artystycznego, miejscem ponownego pojawienia się definitywnie (nieodwracalnie) przeniesionego obiektu sztuki, znamieniem zróżnicowania. Linia przestaje spełniać prostą funkcję dzielącą lub formalnie graniczną, staje się obiektem, w którym tkwią określone właściwości. Postrzega się linię jako niestabilny i ulegający przekształceniom zestaw związków, których funkcje i sens wynikają z ich przydatności, z tego, jak można je spożytkować, a nie pasywnie obserwować.

5.

W kwietniu poprzedniego roku, będąc pod wrażeniem studentów ćwiczących układ tańca, usiłowałem spisać jakie, moim zdaniem, warunki musi spełniać dzieło sztuki - co dawało mi motywację do nauczania i robienia performance, co powodowało, że interesował mnie ten rodzaj estetyki. Chwila tańca, która stała się dla mnie bodźcem, to symboliczny lot - tancerz skaczący w ramiona drugiego, uchwycenie energii w podobny sposób jak francuski fotograf Lartigue realizował swoje studia ciał w locie. Nie było nic wyjątkowego w tym ruchu poza szczególnym obrazem, który utkwił mi w pamięci - swoboda i pewność, z jaką ludzkie ciało pofrunęło w powietrzu, a następnie zostało uchwycone.

Zapisane słowa przekształciły się w esej - próbę nowego spojrzenia na obiekt sztuki jako „obraz spektaklu" - już nie autonomiczny, zwarty obiekt lecz zdarzenie ulotne, ożywione, przekraczające granice oddzielające sztukę wizualną, teatr i taniec. Tekst ów zatytułowałem „W chwili lotu". Składają się nań polemiczne stwierdzenia dotyczące „obrazu spektaklu" - tekst sam w sobie jest sformułowaniem problematycznym, przypomina bardziej ognisko, energię narodzoną z doświadczenia estetycznego.

W Chwili Lotu

„Co performance wnosi do życia? Co powoduje, że pozostaje nam w pamięci? Jaki osad, plama, ślad błąka się i nie daje nam spokoju? Owe falujące obrazy, których pragniemy, których z chciwością poszukujemy, które stale nas zaskakują, które pojawiają się w zbiorowej świadomości chwili obecnej, w bezpośredniości widowiska - najbardziej przemijające ze zjaw.

Obraz spektaklu ma swój własny żar - jak ogień.

Obraz spektaklu „poznajemy" poprzez uczestnictwo w zbiorowej przestrzeni, która nadaje mu kształt.

Obraz spektaklu zrywa z obiektywną perspektywiczną przestrzenią nowoczesności, przestrzenią rozwinięcia, obserwacyjną przestrzenią humanizmu.

Obraz spektaklu opływa wszystko to, co je otacza i tworzy (aktora/widza/otoczenie). Gdy napotyka przeszkodę zwalnia, potem znów przyspiesza, wiruje tworząc pętlę, z wielością perspektyw.

Obraz spektaklu powstaje we wzajemnych relacjach, porusza się wzdłuż ścieżek, które wyłaniają się z procesów fizycznych, poznawczych, emocjonalnych wykonawcy i widza.

Obraz spektaklu kształtuje się sam jako rzeczywistość wirtualna (świat z wyobraźni wydobywający się spod powierzchni czucia), świat w wielu punktach perceptualny.

Obraz spektaklu jest odporny - przekształca to, co subiektywne, wydobywa to, co istnieje poza nim, tworzy związki poza samym sobą.

Obraz widowiska przedkłada kreowanie i transformację

stigation, the site where what I will call „performance image" leaves it trace, its presence. The line (metaphorically seen as a crack or tear in the cultural/ aesthetic fabric) becomes the site of an exploration of the ephemeral and disruptive aspects of the art event, the site of the reappearance of a radically shifted art object, a signifier of difference. The line is no longer seen a simply divisive or as a formal boundary, an object in which properties reside. It is seen as an uncertain and transforming set of ralationships that find sense and function on the basis of what one can do with it, how one can actively collaborate with it, rather than passively observe it.

5.

Last April, prompted by a moment in a dance work performed by students in Amsterdam, I tried to write down what for me were the conditions of the art work - what it was that provided me with the motivation to keep teaching and making performance, what kept me interested in this field of aesthetics. The moment in the dance that provoked me was a moment of flight - a man jumping into the arms of another, capturing energy in the same way as the French photographer Lartigue had done in his studies of bodies in flight. Nothing unusual in this movement except the particular image that remained with me - the freedom and trust with which his body moved through the air and was caught. The writing became an attempt to re-think the art object as „performance image" - an object no longer autonomous and contained but an evet essentially ephemeral, live and crossing boundaries of visual art, music, theatre, dance. The text I call „In a Moment of Flight" and it consists of a number of polemical statements concerning „performance image" - itself a problematic formulation, but something that I take to be the fire at the centre, the energy of aesthetic experience.

In a Moment of Flight

„What is it that performance gives life to? What is it in performance that remains in memory? What are the residues, stains, traces that linger and provoke us? These fluid images, which we desire, which we avidly seek, which constantly surprise us - occurring in the collective present, taking place in the immediacy of performance - remain the most transitory of ghosts.

Performance image has its own life - like fire

Performance image is only „known" through participation in the collective space that enables it to take form

Performance image breaks with the objective, perspectival space of modernity, the space of extension, the observational space of humanism

Performance image flows around the body of performance, (performer/ spectator/ site) encountering resistance, slowing down, speeding up, looping back in on itself, multi-perspectival

Performance image takes place in relationships, moving along pathways that include the physical, cognitive and affective processes of performer and spectator

Performance image forms itself as a virtual/ imaginal world that breaks through the surfaces of the sensory/ perceptual world at many points

Performance image resists/ transforms the subjective, generates something beyond itself, making connections outside itself

Performance image emphasises the generative and transformative over the imitative and representational

Performance image is exchanged as gift, not as commodity

Performance image exists in an act of trust,
a leap into open space,
a moment of flight

nad naśladowanie i przedstawianie.

Obraz spektaklu nie jest towarem wymiennym lecz prezentem.

Obraz spektaklu istnieje w akcie wiary.

skok w otwartą przestrzeń

chwila lotu

błysk ognia na tle ciemniejącego nieba."

Chciałbym by te stwierdzenia były nie tylko prowokujące, ale też wyraźnie określały mój punkt widzenia. Skoncentruję się na jednym z nich.

„Obraz spektaklu ma swój żar - jak ogień."

Z kompozycyjnego punktu widzenia myśl ta oznacza, że w pewnym momencie tworzenia dzieła, owo dzieło - rodzący się „obraz spektaklu" - zaczyna żyć własnym życiem. W tej

the flash of a firework against a darkening sky."

I would hope that these statements are provocative as well as marking a position that I hold. I would like to draw out one of them.

„Performance image has its own life - like fire". Here the idea is - at least from a compositional point of view - that at a certain point in the process of making work, the work - the „performance image" that is coming into being - takes on its own life. It is at this point that the material underhand becomes generative and transformational, that the „living connections" take shape. The performance image begins to take on its own meanings, have is own demension that is not separated from the process that created it, but a extension of it. In this way the artist does not relinquish responsibility, but recognises that the

właśnie chwili formowany materiał sam zaczyna wytwarzać i przekształcać nabierające kształtu „żywe łączniki". Obraz spektaklu zaczyna przyjmować własne znaczenia, nabierać własnych wymiarów nierozdzielnych od procesu, który go stworzył i staje się jego przedłużeniem. Tym samym artysta nie odrzuca odpowiedzialności, ale uświadamia sobie, że „dzieło sztuki" uczestniczy w znaczeniach, które nie są i nie mogą być całkowicie przez niego zdeterminowane.

Życie nie jest formą dokonaną, zamkniętą lecz ciągłym dynamicznym procesem zmierzającym do odzwierciedlenia kruchego związku między tym, co racjonalne i emocjonalne. „Życie" obrazu jest, w pewnym sensie, efektem tej magicznej operacji polegającej na tym, że części każdego procesu opierające się temu, co racjonalne, zbadane, umożliwiające spojrzenie w głąb, łamiące bariery techniki czy umiejętności, powodujące, że działania urojone/ fizyczne dają rezultaty - niekoniecznie logiczne - mogą realizować to, co „niewidzialne", „niewypowiadalne" lecz stale krążące na obrzeżach naszego doświadczenia.

6.

Obraz spektaklu, jako siła twórcza, nie poddaje się definiowaniu. W tym sensie jego granice ulegają zmianom i przekształceniom. Jestem zwolennikiem idei kreatywności o ile próbuję umożliwić innym pracę z:

- istniejącymi już szczegółami, konkretnym materiałem, nie zaś z pojęciami abstrakcyjnymi bądź ukształtowanymi obrazami
- „kreowaniem" czegoś w warunkach spektaklu, a nie „grą aktorską"
- śladami i obrazami rodzącymi takie działanie
- fizyczną obecnością obiektu w danym miejscu
- możliwościami „operacji magicznych" - urojone/ fizyczne działania mogą odnosić skutek, ale nie muszą być logiczne czy racjonalne, to zaś powoduje zaistnienie „niewidzialnego" czy „niewypowiadalnego"
- strategiami kompozycyjnymi, które umożliwiają kształtowanie formy z danego materiału, a nie dominację struktury
- koncentracją, ruchem skierowanym od idei ku działaniu/ od ciała do obrazu
- zastosowaniem środków twórczych do „odczarowania"/ odzyskania wyalienowanych bytów otaczających nas.

Ważne jest, aby zrobić coś razem, „coś" co w danej chwili można określić mianem performance, spektaklu angażującego twórczy wysiłek grupy ludzi w danym miejscu i czasie, wyzwalającego coś, czego nie można przewidzieć wcześniej, co w jakimś sensie posiada własne „życie", które napełnia energią ożywczą, rozmachem wszystkich zaangażowanych (widzów/ uczestników/ twórców); „życie", które nie pozostaje w oddaleniu od szerzej pojętego środowiska kulturowego, społecznego, politycznego.

Procesy te koncentrują się wokół doświadczenia chwili, wokół tego, co dzieje się, gdy ludzie gromadzą się - fizycznie, poprzez wyobraźnię czy układ społeczny - jako jednostki czy grupy, aby zrobić coś, aby wspólnie zrealizować obraz spektaklu. Doświadczenie to umyka opisom w tym sensie, że dzieje się ono „na żywo", ono samo, nie zaś refleksja o nim czy jego opis. Dla przykładu, gdy prosimy jedną osobę o podniesienie drugiej z podłogi, to takie polecenie rozum z łatwością rejestruje. Jako działanie angażujące cię w nasz problem jak to się dzieje, lub też co mogłoby to oznaczać dla kogoś patrzącego, staje się ono czymś wymagającym innego zestawu „rozumień", aby wykonać takie polecenie. To właśnie inny zestaw „rozumień" jest ważny - owo przesunięcie uwagi, umiejętność angażowania się w to, co dzieje się na przeciw nas.

Przywiązywanie wagi do „wymiaru chwili obecnej" (według Miroslava Holuba) - choćby w odniesieniu do performance -

„art work" is participating in meanings that are not and cannot be completely determined by the artist. This life is not a completion, a closure, but a constant process of moving towards form that recognises the uncertain relationship between the rational and the emotional. This „life" of the image is in a sense the result of a magical operation - that is the parts of any process that resist the rational, that go beyond what we can know, that can provide insight, that break through the boundaries of technique or skill, that allow imaginal/ physical actions to be effective but not necessarily logical, that can begin to realise the „unseen", the „unspoken" that is constantly hovers around the margins of our experience.

6.

Performance image, like creativity, tends to resist and perhaps should resist definitions. In that sense its frontiers are constantly mutable and transforming. I feel committed an idea of creativity in so far as I try to enable people to work with

- the details of what is there, the material to hand, rather than with abstractions, with already formed images- the „action" of doing something in performance circumstances rather than „acting"
- the traces and images that such action generates
- attention to physical presence, to object and to site
- the possibility of „magical operations" - that imaginal/ physical and that can begin to realise the „unseen", the „unspoken"
- compositional strategies that allows material to move towards form rather than be determined by structure
- an attention, a movement that goes from idea to action/ from body to image
- the possibility of using creative means to re-enchant/ re-claim the alienated realities that surround us.

What is important is trying to make something together, a „something" that in this instance might be called performance - that involves the creative efforts of a group of people in a particular time and place - that invokes something that cannot be totally predicted in advance - that in some sense or other is given its own life, a „life"that provides an imaginative and regenarative energy for people involved (as spectators/ participants or performers); a „life" that is not divorced from larger cultural, social, political, or environmental realities.

These processes are centrally concerned with the experience of the moment, in what is happening as people come together physically, imaginatively, socially, as individuals or as groups, to do something, to make performance images together. This experince always resists description in the sense that much of its activity is happening as a live event, the thing itself, rather than a reflection about, a description of, the thing. For example, asking a person to lift another person from the floor is an instruction that is easily grasped in the mind. As an action that engages you in the present problem of how it is done, or indeed what it might begin to mean for someone watching, it is something that requires a different set of „understandings" to realise the instruction. It is this different set of „understandings" - this shift in attention, an ability to engage with what is in front of us, that is important.

The insistence on an attention to the „dimension of the present moment" (as Miroslav Holub calls it) - at least as an approach to making performance - finds an expression in the way that materials as well as „time" are used

This is not a reductivist approach to „things as they are", or a belief in some „absolute" nature or quality, but rather a recognition that „things as they are" (simple actions - walking, sitting, standing; materials - salt, metal, fire) are already complex enough without the imposition or overlay of additional meanings.

znajduje wyraz w sposobie, w jaki posługujemy się materiałami, jak również czasem. Nie jest to reduktywistyczne podejście do „rzeczy takimi jakie są"bądź wiara w jakąś absolutną naturę czy cechę, ale stwierdzenie faktu, że „rzeczy są takie jakie są" (proste czynności - chodzenie, siedzenie, stanie czy surowce - sól, metal) są i tak wystarczająco złożone bez narzucania czy dokładania dodatkowych znaczeń.

Octavio Paz, odnosząc się do dzieła Duchamp'a, opisuje dzieło sztuki jako „machinę do tworzenia znaczeń". Usuwając przypuszczenia, oczekiwania, uwarunkowane reakcje docieramy do samego materiału, a zatem do punktu rozpoczęcia pracy, pozwalamy rzeczom mówić za siebie, odnaleźć własne życie i zaangażować w nieodłączne opóźnianie i wypełnianie znaczeń. Taki proces może wyłącznie doprowadzić materię performance do punktu kontaktowego - do tworzenia wzajemnych relacji. Wówczas zaczynają pojawiać się i pogłębiać obrazy oraz ledwie przeczuwany szerszy sens (radykalnej) spoistości, czyli „żywych łączników". Dlatego każdy spektakl będzie przesadzony w momencie pierwszego rozpoznania materiału - sprawdzania, jak poszczególne elementy do siebie pasują. „Życie", które zaczyna wypełniać rzeczywistość, tworzone między zamysłem twórcy spektaklu a percepcją widzów - co Marcel Duchamp określa jako „różnicę"(wynik) czyli samo dzieło - dyktuje tutaj pierwsze znaczenia.

Wsparcie dla dzieła sztuki jako formy wręczania podarunku, obdarzonej wyobraźnią wymiany (szczególnie w „żywych" środkach wyrazu) jest niezmiernie istotne w kulturowej atmosferze zdominowanej przez wartości materialistyczne i konsumpcyjne. Dzieło sztuki dostarcza nam środków do ponownego wyobrażenia sobie i sformułowania naszych jednostkowych i kolektywnych przyszłości wolnych od konwencjonalnych oczekiwań i wartości. Victor Schklowsky wyraził to w następujący sposób:

„Sztuka istnieje po to, by pomóc nam odzyskać poczucie doznawania życia, by kamień uczynić kamiennym. Celem sztuki jest przekazanie doznania obiektu takim jakim go postrzegamy a nie rozpoznajemy. Technika sztuki polega na czynieniu rzeczy „nieznajomymi", na wykonaniu „niewyrazistych" form, aby przedłużyć i utrudnić percepcję. Akt percepcji w sztuce jest celem samym w sobie i należy go przedłużać. W sztuce liczy się doświadczanie procesu konstrukcji, nie zaś efekt końcowy."

Obiekt nigdy nie jest „ukończony"lecz włączony w zmieniającą się recepcję znaczeń wynikającą z kontekstu. Jeśli jest to prawdą, to my - artyści zmuszeni jesteśmy do zaangażowania w procesy obejmujące nasze emocjonalne i fizyczne egzystencje oraz skłonności racjonalne, porządkujące.

7.

Na zakończenie można przywołać myśl wynikającą z pracy w i z krajobrazem - stajemy tutaj wobec braku początku i końca, jest to teren, na który wkraczamy w dowolnym punkcie, zaś granice zacierają się. Praca w krajobrazie stanowi wyzwanie dla pojęcia ramy oraz umiejętności widza objęcia jej, obwieszczenia własnej niedoskonałości i spowodowania by rama stała się „ramą umysłu".

Inny amerykański poeta William Carlos Williams przypuszczał, w tym kontekście, który jest zarówno metaforyczny jak i realistyczny, że to, co bliskie staje się uniwersalne - my zaś dajemy życie temu, co znajduje się na wprost nas.

Ric Allsopp, listopad 1993.
Przekład
Agnieszka Grochulska

Octavio Paz, with reference to the work of Duchamp, describes the art work as a „machine for producing meanings". In trying to strip away assumptions, expectations, conditioned responses in order to arrive at the material itself, we hope to arrive at where the work begins; letting things speak for themselves, find their own life, and engage in the inherentemptying and filling of meaning.

Such processes can only bring performance material to a point of contact - things are put in relationship, images are starting to occur, to deepen, but the broader sense of (radical) coherence or „living connections" is only hinted at. Thus any „performance"will be pitched at this point of first recognition of material - essaying: trying things out to see how they/ if they fit. The „life" that begins to inhabit the reality that is formed between the intention of the performance maker(s) and the perception of the spectator(s) - what Marcel Duchamp refers to as the „difference" that is the work itself - makes its first meanings here.

Support for art work as a form of gift-giving, of imaginative exchange (particularly in „live" media) is particularly important in a cultural atmosphere dominated by consumerism and materialist values. Art work provides us with a means of re-imagining and re-forming our individual and collective futures that can be freed from conventional expectations and values. Victor Schklovsky put is as follows:

„Art exists to help us to recover the sensation of life, to make the stone stony. The end of art is to give a sensation of the object as seen, not as recognised. The technique of art is to make things „unfamiliar", to make forms obscure, so as to increase the difficulty and the duration of perception. The act of perception in art is an end in itself and must be prolonged. In art, it is our experience of the process of construction that counts, not the finished product."

The product is never in a sense „finished" but constantly involved in a shifting reception of its meanings in a given context - if this is the case then we as artists are impelled towards engagement with processes that embrace both our affective, emotional, and physical selves and our rational, structuring inclinations.

7.

A final thought might be taken from working in and with landscape - here we are confronted with no beginnings, no endings, a place that can be entred at any point, dissolving borders. The process of working in landscape thus challenges the notion of the frame and the viewers ability to contain it, announcing its own incompletion and forcing the frame to become a „frame of mind". As another American poet William Carlos Williams suspected, in this context which is both metaphorical and actual, the local becomes the only universal - we begin to give life to that which is in front of us.

Ric Allsopp
November,1993

(1996)

'Textracts'

Word Theatre - Dialogue, catalogue ,

Copenhagen: Kanonhallen, pp.10-11

textracts

BY RIC ALLSOPP
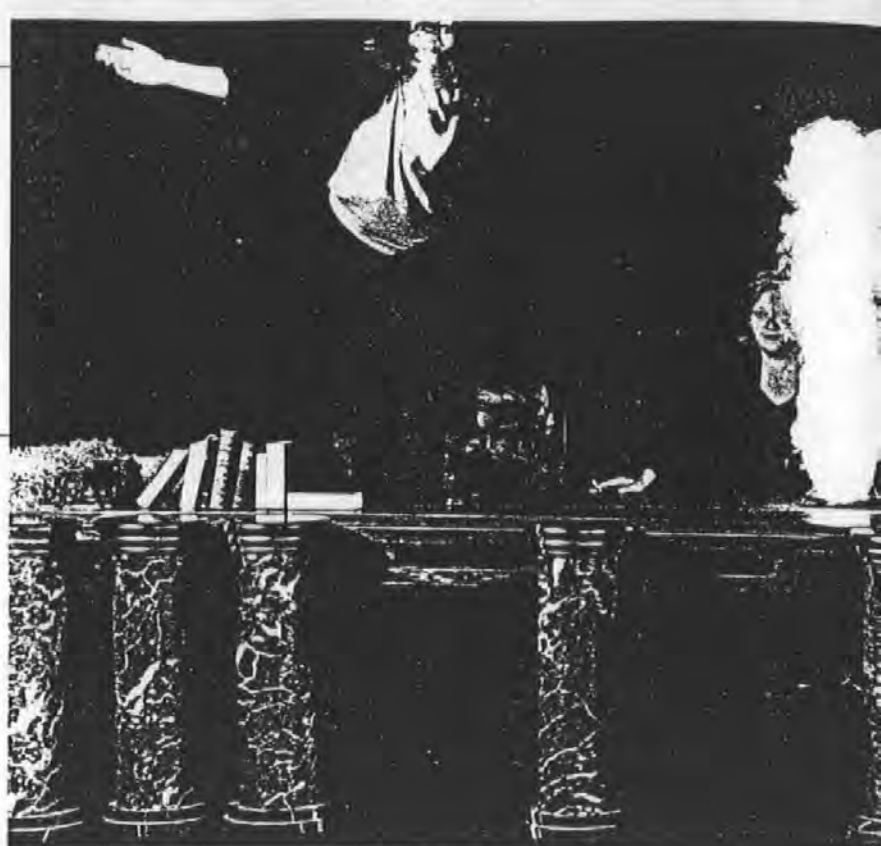
The illusionary nature of theatre – its ability to conjure presence and the appearance of 'spontaneous speech' – is in part due to the perceived role of the dramatic text within it. Traditionally theatre has been seen as the performance of a preexisting text; as being 'shadowed' by a prior text that, whilst open to a range of permissible readings and interpretations[1], maintains its own coherence as a written text outside the ephemeral moment of its performance. The constancy of the text and the constancy of identity of the audience that interprets it are two central assumptions on which the performance of occidental theatre is based.

The tensions between the writerly and the theatrical or performative consciousness that are contained within the text continue to be the primary site where the redefinitions of theatre and performance are played out. In *The Theatre and its Double* (1936) Antonin Artaud (still) calls for "an end to the subjogation of the theatre to the text" and the recovery of "a kind of unique language half-way between gesture and thought". The dreamlike reification of the word that Artaud imagined has inscribed itself in much post-war theatre work (for example Richard Foreman or Robert Wilson) where the word as an object takes its place as an equivalent to the other elements that constitute the performance. Writing more recently on Derrida's theories of 'presence' in relation to theatre, Elinor Fuchs has indicated that "writing itself, which has traditionally retired behind the apparent presence of performance, is openly declaring itself the environment in which dramatic structure is situated", and one might add 'where the performative is located'.

The constantly oscillating relation of text to performance – the feedback between the form and the dramaturgical or compositional strategies that informs much contemporary arts practice – points towards a dramaturgy of interactive texts which must be predicated on fluidity and adaptability rather than constancy and conformity.

The work of Gary Hill, Robert Frank, Marina Abramovic, Paul Sermon, Ilya Kabakov [2] (a widely differing group of artists) cannot be placed under the category of theatre, but is (in part at least) concerned with the conditions of performance and the possibilities (spatial/temporal/emotional) that a performative and interactive framework gives to the physical, textual and plastic material that they are working with. There would seem to be a common aspect in the work of these artists which arises from the various ways in which text is placed in relation to the grain of work. This might be identified as a conscious absence (an eloquent void) that is delineated by text, or by silence. This points firstly towards a kind of text-performance relationship that is qualitatively different from that relationship of text and performance that is found in theatre where such silences and absences tend to be filled by, rather than voided by text; and secondly to an interactive text that is not predicated on the transcription of speech or the illusion of 'spontaneous speech' but on the ability of each spectator to interact with, and therefore change and be changed by, a mute text of sufficient

eloquence and familiarity to hold the interaction in tension.

For instance the silence that permeats the installation *Tall Ships* (1994) (in contrast to many other of Gary Hill's installations which include sonic and/or graphic explorations of text) renders eloquent the individual inter-actions beetween spectator and the ghostly projections that fill the long darkened corridor which frames the experience. It is an essentially theatrical experience in so far that it conjures apparent presence from absence. The text as such is nowhere revealed – the installlation is an intense individ-ual experience which whilst using some of the spatial conventions of theatre does not allow for a collective reading of the images but an individual one. The spectator is drawn into an individual network of inter-textuality : drawing on the history of similar interactions with familiar people as a series of behavioural texts; drawing on the virtual dialogues which seem to take place with each of the sixteen people that inhabit the corridor.

In his introduction to his 1980 anthology of performance texts,

Scenarios: Scripts to Perform (1980) a title which reflects the transitional and impermanent status of its contents – Richard Kostelanetz assumes that "innova-tions in theatrical art in part depend upon scripting so radically alternative it ensures that a performance cannot be realised in conventional ways", and its converse that "conventional texts are conducive to conventional performance". It is not however just the form (or lack of form) of the text which facilitates a transition from theatre to perform-ance, but an increasing rereading of the assumptions that underlie the notions of what constitutes a text, what its material treatments are, what writing is, and where and how it takes place.

[1] *A 'literal' performance of the text 'Woyzeck' for example, that is letter-by-letter, would not be a permissible dramatic inter-pretation, though it is a possible (though unrecommended) performance reading.*

[2] *Gary Hill 'Tall Ships', Robert Frank 'Moving Pictures', Marina Abramovic 'Night Sea Crossing', Paul Sermon 'Telematic Dreaming', Ilya Kabakov 'The Reading Room'.*

References :
Ric Allsopp (ed.) (1996)
'On Illusion'
Performance Research Vol. 1, No. 3
Antonin Artaud (1936:1979)
'The Theatre and Its Double'
(London : Calder & Boyars)
Jon Erickson (1995)
'The Fate of the Object'
(Ann Arbor: Michigan UP)
Elinor Fuchs (1990)
'Presence and the Revenge of Writing' in PAJ
David George (1996)
'Performance Epistemology' in Performance Research Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring)

(1997)

'Writing - Text - Performance'

Writing – Text – Performance

Ric Allsopp

In the introduction to his 1980 anthology of performance texts, *Scenarios: Scripts to Perform* – a title which reflects the transitional and impermanent status of its contents – Richard Kostelanetz writes that 'innovations in theatrical art in part depend upon scripting so radically alternative it ensures that a performance cannot be realized in conventional ways' and, its converse, that 'conventional texts are conducive to conventional performance'. It is not, however, just the form (or lack of form) of the text which facilitates a transition from writing to performance, but an increasing rereading of the assumptions that underlie the notions of what constitutes a text, what its material treatments are, what writing is, and where and how it takes place. I want to write here about the act of writing in its relationship to text and to performance, with reference to two examples of contemporary practice that arguably lie at the extreme limits of writing in regard to theatre or at least theatrical space: Gary Hill's interactive video installation *Tall Ships* (1992) and Caroline Bergvall's performed text installation *Eclat* (1996) – a version of which was published in the Autumn 1996 issue of *Performance Research* 'On Illusion'.

As Bonnie Marranca has noted in her recent book *Ecologies of Theatre* (1996:36), the Pulitzer Prize board chose not to confer a prize for Robert Wilson's *the CIVIL warS* because no conventional text existed for the work. This was in 1986. How much has changed in the relationship between writing, text and performance in the last decade? Is the debate about the theatre text over sixty years after Artaud's first manifesto for *The Theatre of Cruelty* – to name but one point of fracture – still based on an idea of writing as something that is primarily located on the page? Certainly contemporary practice in various arts disciplines would suggest that the idea of writing (and the analytical and dramaturgical discourses that surround it) has loosened its ties to the page. I am thinking here not only of Robert Wilson and others of his generation, but also of the range of performance work, installation work, electronic and live artwork that has begun to open up the materiality of writing and to influence and reshape ways in which contemporary theatre writing can be thought.

The illusionary nature of theatre – its ability to conjure presence and the appearance of 'spontaneous speech' – is in part due to the perceived role of the dramatic text within it. Traditionally theatre has been seen as the performance of a pre-existing text; as being 'shadowed' by a prior text that, whilst open to a range of permissible readings and interpretations,[*] maintains its own coherence as a written text outside the ephemeral moment of

[*] A 'literal' performance of the text *Woyzeck*, for example, that is, letter by letter, would not be a permissible dramatic interpretation, though it is a possible (though unrecommended) performance reading.

its performance. The constancy of the text and the homogeneity of the audience that interprets it are two central assumptions on which the tradition and performance of western theatre are based.

The tensions between the writerly and the theatrical or performative consciousness that are contained within the text continue to be the primary site where the redefinitions of theatre and performance are played out. In the *First Manifesto*, Antonin Artaud called for 'an end to the subjugation of the theatre to the text' and the recovery of 'a kind of unique language half-way between gesture and thought' (1970: 68). The dreamlike reification of the word that Artaud imagined has inscribed itself in much postwar theatre work (for example,

Richard Foreman or Robert Wilson) where the word as object takes its place as an equivalent to the other elements that constitute the performance. Writing more recently on Derrida's theories of 'presence' in relation to theatre, Elinor Fuchs has indicated that 'writing itself, which has traditionally retired behind the apparent presence of performance, is openly declaring itself the environment in which dramatic structure is situated' and, one might add, 'where the performative is located' (1990: 163).

What happens to 'writing' as we move from modernist practice based on ideas of unity, disciplinarity and authenticity? What happens to 'writing' as we move towards postmodernist readings that identify the artwork as part of a contextual ground that is multivalent, participatory and interdisciplinary? What is the role of the text when performance tends towards transformational rather than mimetic or reactualizing art? The present situation is intensified by the impact of media and digital technologies and, more importantly, by the shifts in value that are the effect of cultural, political and aesthetic change. The question of the place of 'writing' is now more pressing than ever. Theatre in its conventional sense and practice (as

perpetuating the illusions of spontaneous speech and of spontaneous action) will of course remain a central part of the spectrum of arts practice, but questions of new direction and strategy must be concerned with the placing and relationship of writing to the elements that constitute theatre.

Performance as a frame for understanding certain types of arts practice, traditionally theatre and dance, is now increasingly applied to categories of practice that include video installation work, sculpture, poetry and other forms of time-based arts. How is writing placed within this ever widening field of performance? The historical classifications of the arts are proving all the time less appropriate as a means for the formal reading and critical placing of the kind of language work that is being produced. Some concerted excavation of textual work is called for. As long as the boundaries between performance art forms continue to be shored up by their specific histories as disciplines, there needs to be an effort to relocate writing both on and beyond the page, as a dynamic fabric or texture of sonic, graphic, physical and material writings. These writings can give rise to representations both abstract and realist, both ambiguous and lucid; to texts that 'hold' in tension these many aspects of contemporary performance; and to a dramaturgy that animates and elucidates the dynamic connections between these equivalent elements.

Performance writing – as this view of the relationship between performance and writing might now be called – can locate itself only as part of the atomization of literature, theatre, music and so on. It highlights the dynamic tensions that arise from the pooling of different writing practices – especially the materiality of writing beyond the page and forms of digital writing that are enabled by new technologies. Is writing's role in new theatre that of functioning still as a guiding background, as the blueprint of a live piece – where the text is absorbed and subsumed by live performance? What if writing forces a disjunction between performing a 'hidden text' and performing writing? Can writing be an
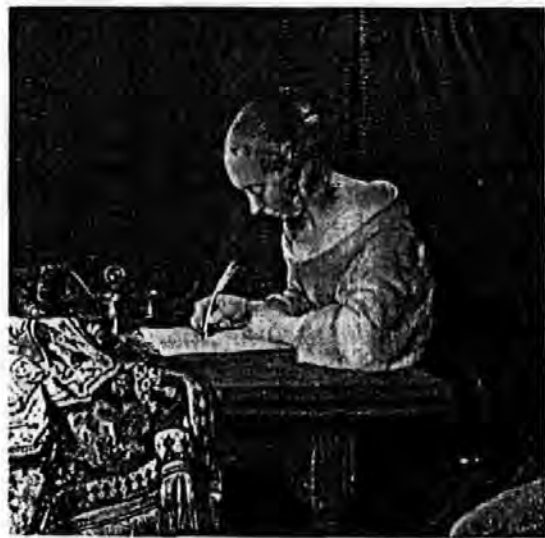
• Detail from *The Letterwriter*, Gerard Ter Borch. Courtesy of Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

p. 47 • *Cleft*, Brigid McLeer. Text-based photogram

equivalent element informing and informed by site, context, space, body, time, object?

Two ideas are central here. First there is the materiality of writing as trace rather than as a transcription of speech, as an inscription rather than as description, a writing *about* something. The materiality of writing concerns writing as it performs itself as graphic, sonic, or physical presence. This is an area that has not been not well considered in the readings of either dramatic or performance texts. The 'visible and plastic materialization of speech' or the manipulation of speech as 'solid object which overturns and disturbs things' that Artaud suggests is paralleled by the manipulation and materialization of writing itself as 'solid object' – the inclusion of both the act and the trace of writing in theatre, not simply as a descriptive element, as talking about writing, writing about talking, but as a structural and equivalent element.

Second, there is an aesthetics of equivalence: an aesthetics that gives equivalent status to all the elements that may constitute performance. Both John Cage and Aristotle base their aesthetics on the assumption that art should imitate the processes of the natural world. Their views of how the processes are constituted, however, are diametrically opposed. For Aristotle the causal processes of nature accord to a universalizing unified hierarchical system; for Cage they establish a field of equivalence that is characterized by unimpededness and interpenetration.* The contemporary idea of equivalence then finds its roots in the aesthetics of John Cage, and implies both the

> * For a comparative exposition of Aristotelian and Cagean poetics, see Natalie Crohn Schmitt (1990) *Actors and Onlookers*, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, pp. 5–38.

materiality of the elements that constitute a given performance and also their overall equivalence within a value system. Thus, for example, 'writing', which (at least within 'classical' theatre aesthetics) has remained prior to the text, a 'hidden' activity subsumed within the dramatic text, which is itself subsumed within the theatre performance, as an element in the overall construction of the artwork/performance is given equal status with other elements, which have traditionally been

prioritized. This idea of equivalence does not imply a flattening-out of material or a necessary drift into relativism, but, I believe, opens up the possibilities of the radically different forms of theatre that can be seen in the work of, say, Kantor, Richard Foreman, Robert Wilson, Forced Entertainment, or Baktruppen, and of many more marginal and ephemeral performance-makers and artists.

It is perhaps no more than a coincidence that the invention of video – the magnetically captured image – happened to coincide with Derrida's rereading of Artaud's *Theatre and its Double* in which Artaud incidentally speaks of a 'magnetic intercommunication'. Derrida provides a theoretical ground where writing rather than speech is prioritized and from where a new theatre, a theatre of images, of equivalent elements, can be read; a theatre in which we can see the relationships between writing, text and performance that have characterized aspects of experimental theatre since the 1960s.

The 'new sense' of writing that Artaud proposes is a theatrical writing that 'will no longer occupy the limited position of simply being the notation of words, but will cover the entire range of this new language: not only phonetic writing and the transcription of speech, but also hieroglyphic writing, the writing in which phonetic elements are co-ordinated to visual, pictorial, and plastic elements' (Derrida 1978: 240).

The theatre text is conventionally treated as if spoken. The sense of presence that is carried in the spoken word is the communicative presence that theatre attempts to realize through closing the gaps between form and meaning. The presence of writing disrupts this gap, again forcing a disjunction between performing a 'hidden text' and performing itself as writing. For this reason the Greek philosopher Plato condemned writing because the written word was cut loose from the communicative presence of speech. But this distance – the particularity of writing – is embedded in theatre. Theatre as a set of interlinked and intertextual elements writes itself in specific space, specific time, and constitutes a series of writings which

cohere and are readable within the context in which they take place. The absence of the writer, and likewise the absence of the performer, is not a condition under which theatre fails to take place, but a condition under which theatre continues to act – to provoke a reading. The presence of writing as Artaud foresaw extends rather than closes down the possibilities of theatre and draws out the possible readings to which theatre gives rise.

In a memorable phrase Jacques Derrida wrote of the spoken word as 'the cadaver of psychic speech' (1978: 240) referring to the status of speech in the dream work and in Artaud's proposals for a gestural speech; as well as to the classical conflation of writing and death. The phrase can read in several ways: possibly as the chrysalis or cocoon from which the *imago* (image) or 'final perfect form'

emerges, the theatre image as dynamic of equivalent elements; or as that which 'falls' from psychic speech, the cadaver – that which is capable of being converted through the act of writing into 'lifeless matter' (the preserved, inscribed text) – and equally capable of being reconverted, reanimated into resonant image. Derrida's phrase provides a telling image of the difficult and unstable relationship between the act of writing, the resulting text and its performance.

In another context the Portuguese artist Juan Cabrita Reis, whilst speaking of art as 'a discharge of the unconscious that allows one to see without explanation', in a further image of the 'psychic speech' that Derrida refers to asks whether 'art is an exorcism of death', whether it confirms life (Celaint 1990). We might well be tempted to agree

· *The Anatomy Class*, Rembrandt.© Foundation Johan Maurits van Nassau, Mauritshuis – The Hague.

that this is the case given much contemporary artwork which plays itself out on the edge of this final divide – Damien Hirst or Ron Athey, for example – but also given the fact that art has always returned to the fascination of death as the absolute determining point of life.

What is the role of dramaturgy in relation to such ideas of writing? Does it simply enable us, like Dr Nicolas Tulp, to anatomize the text, to open up the cadaverous word (of writing), to understand and conjoin the parts and the elements of performance; or does it enable us to reanimate the text, once again to 'see without explanation', to 'overturn and disturb things' with the solidity of the act of writing?

In what ways can the text in this sense be absorbed into a dramaturgy that understands writing as a sonic, visual, graphic and physical act? And are the texts that emerge from such an understanding, texts that are played out, realized as much in time as they are in space, as much ephemeral and transforming as they are preserving and passive? Is the theatre text only a means of the preservation of speech, of stage direction, of scenic plot, of narrative that through dramaturgical means can be reanimated, represented? Or is the image one not of classical anatomy performed on the dead body of the text, but concerned with an interactive image – the living/live relationships between the equivalent elements that make up the body of performance, the body of the text, the body of the voice? Patrice Pavis has spoken of the dramaturg as a 'go-between, inevitably caught in this space between page and stage'; between text and its performance, between performance and its writing.

Graham Swift who recently won the prestigious Booker Prize for fiction (1996) said in his acceptance speech that novels are 'meant for that intimate, silent, invisible but potentially magical point of contact between the reader and the page'. Theatre has also (at least for the last 150 years) provided an intimate space for its reading – the individual listening and watching through the fourth wall from the darkened space of the auditorium – but the intimacy between the writing and reading of theatre

is mediated not by the page but by an array of elements in which 'writing' is variously inscribed, the texture or textuality of the elements being always determined by how writing is inscribed in them. The constantly oscillating relation of text to performance – the feedback between form and the dramaturgical or compositional strategies that informs much contemporary arts practice – points towards a dramaturgy of interactive texts, which must be predicated on fluidity and adaptability rather than constancy and conformity.

The work of such a widely diverse and different group of artists as Gary Hill, Robert Frank, Marina Abramovic, Paul Sermon and Ilya Kabakov* cannot be placed under the category of theatre,

*In particular: Gary Hill, *Tall Ships*; Robert Frank, *Moving Pictures*; Marina Abramovic/ Ulay, *Night Sea Crossing*; Paul Sermon, *Telematic Dreaming*; Ilya Kabakov, *The Reading Room*.

but is (in part at least) concerned with the conditions of performance and the possibilities (spatial/ temporal/emotional) that a performative and interactive framework gives to the physical, textual and plastic material with which they are working. There would seem to be in the work of these artists a common aspect that arises from the various ways in which text is placed in relation to the grain of the work. This might be identified as a conscious absence (an eloquent void) that is delineated by text, or by silence. This points first towards a kind of text–performance relationship qualitatively different from the relationship of text and performance found in theatre, where such silences and absences tend to be filled by, rather than voided by, text; and second to an interactive 'text' predicated not on the transcription of speech or the illusion of 'spontaneous speech' but on the ability of each spectator to interact with, and therefore change and be changed by, a mute text of sufficient eloquence and familiarity to hold the interaction in tension.

The space of Gary Hill's *Tall Ships* is entirely a 'theatre' in the sense of being a peopled place where one is enabled 'to see', a place where the unseen (the psychic speech that Derrida refers to) is revealed and animated once again.

Down a completely dark, ninety-foot long corridor-like space, sixteen black and white images of people, varying in ethnic origin, age and gender, are projected directly onto the walls. No border of light defines the frame of the images: only the figures themselves give off light into the space. The last projection is on the back wall, at the end of the corridor. From standing or seated positions ranging from one to two feet high, the figures are first seen in the distance at approximately eye-level. As the viewer walks through the [otherwise silent] space electronic switches are triggered, and the figures walk forward until they are approximately lifesize. They remain in the foreground, wavering slightly, until the viewer leaves the immediate area. Since all the projections are independently interactive, any number of figures can be in the distance, walking toward or away from a viewer, or standing in the foreground, depending on the number of viewers in the space.

(Mignol 1994: 98)

Where is the text? Where is the writing? The embedded text here is not the illusion of spontaneous speech, or the sense of a writing that is prior

You've decided to follow on through. (Well done). Leave the r....
Back in the corridor. A long narrow strip of encased space. What app.... to b. here. Wha n.t app..rs. Stick to thplan. Walk towards the staircase. There's a big cracked wall doing a small Beckett to your left. A frame at th end of the by the main-door is catching your attention. You may wan t to have a l k. Then again. The staircase. Now there's a. Lets go upstairs.

Slowewfly. One, step, et. the, tme, I and 2and 2and.
A ttertone is an elevation device increases demationalisation'. there is an occupation which is slow & open & an acoustic escalator That's good. continue
4and 5and 6and.

White walls. A regular spatial arrangement for domestic passage Where are you not who You've reached the first landing Still Beyond that Who lives here Was a writer a poster. What appears to b here A couple of doors Twins not twins. What you see & what you ? Show caution. Ze cloth does make re mord.
)))))(((((0))))HO((ST)))MY))))FAC(((((((((E))))))))OUTOF)))))))DEEP((((BACGROUND
)•)[)|)•

(sowacanseeyou)

((((((((((((Or not figur

• Caroline Bergvall, Eclat, 1996 (detail)

to performance, but is the sense of texture, woven into the bed of the work as site, as location from which dreaming may occur. Writing is embedded in the poetic silences that are at the centre of *Tall Ships* – a suspended writing that communicates the intensity of a text whose poetic nucleus is silent.

The silence that permeates the installation (in contrast to many other of Gary Hill's installations, which include sound) renders eloquent the individual interactions between spectator and the ghostly projections that fill the long darkened corridor which frames the experience. It is an essentially theatrical experience in so far as it conjures apparent presence from absence. The text as such is nowhere revealed – the installation is an intense experience which whilst using some of the spatial conventions of theatre does not allow for a collective reading of the images but for an individual one. The spectator is drawn into a network of intertextuality: drawing on the history of similar interactions with familiar people as a series of behavioural texts; drawing on the virtual dialogues that seem to take place with each of the sixteen people that inhabit the corridor.

The renunciation of the 'theatrical superstition of the text and the dictatorship of the writer' that Artaud promised in *The Theatre and Its Double* has in a sense been replaced by the rethinking of writing not only as phonetic speech, but as itself a material element within post-classical performance. For Derrida ' it is less a question of constructing a mute stage than of constructing a stage whose clamor has not yet been pacified into words' (1978: 240). *Tall Ships* finds precisely the speech before words which has not been separated by the logic of representation. The silences of the installation are not mute but eloquent in the interactions that happen between the spectator and the projection of 'ourselves' that occurs.

By contrast Caroline Bergvall's performance installation *Eclat* – which means, as it moves between languages, both 'dazzling effect' and 'a burst of shrapnel' – constructs a clamorous stage, where writing and text are continually present as sound and as visual sign. The work loosens the relationship of

text to space, allowing a text which is literally carried in the ears of each individual to invoke the absent performer as much as it invokes and demands a constant rereading of the space of performance.

Unlike *Tall Ships*, which is installed and focused in the formal and minimal space of the gallery (and which resists replication through other media), the writing of *Eclat* (like shrapnel) is dispersed as text in a number of linked forms: as a series of graphic texts within a 23-minute performance in a domestic and suburban house in London (the Institution of Rot); as a sound tape that is played for each interactive performer in which the writings form a 'guided tour' of the actual and imaginary spaces of the house; and as a text for the page which evokes ideas of migration between the various 'surfaces' on which writing can take place. The 'surfaces' are both ephemeral (the speaking voice of the writer, the performance duration of the domestic spaces where the performance took place last May) or erasable (the magnetic audiotape of the voice, the computer disk on which the text was written) and preserved (the pages shown here on which the performance is reanimated through reading). Both on the page and in the 'live' performance of the text, the work keeps ironically pointing to the frequent ruptures between the play of illusory spatiality in the text, and the reading and consequent perception of the actual space of performance.[*]

These two brief examples of writing at the extremes of performance when seen from the perspective of theatre, point towards new ways of utilizing and thinking how text might operate within theatre and the more general relationship between writing, text and performance. By destabilizing and displacing our assumptions about the role of writing and the texts that writing produces, by extending the range of what we include as theatre writings or as performance writings, we encourage theatre to open up the possibilities of the intertextual and the inter-subjective and open new, unseen, forgotten, veiled,

* For a version of *Eclat* 'for the page' see *Performance Research* 1(3), 'On Illusion' (1996): 70–1. A third and extended version of Caroline Bergvall's *Eclat* has been published in book form (1996) by cris cheek at Lowestoft, UK: Sound & Language, ISBN 1 899 100 06 7.

hidden readings from the interplay of texts at its disposal.

The performance of writing, the texture and materiality of writing, its contemporary migrations across surfaces, across media, however it is 'placed' within, beside, underneath the performance work as a whole, this is a central consideration in the development of any new performance and dramaturgic strategies. The recognition of writing not simply as an *a priori* of theatre, the means of preserving the hidden text of performance, but as a present and equivalent dynamic may further open up the possibilities of theatre.

REFERENCES

Artaud, Antonin (1970) *The Theatre and Its Double*, London: Calder & Boyars.

Bergvall, Caroline (1996) 'Eclat – Occupations des Lieux 1–10', *Performance Research* 1(3): 70–1.

Celaint, Germano (1996) *Juan Cabrita Reis*, Amsterdam: De Appel Foundation.

Derrida, Jacques (1978 [1967]) *Writing and Difference*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Erickson, Jon (1995) *The Fate of the Object*, Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan University Press.

Fuchs, Elinor (1985) 'Presence and the Revenge of Writing', *Performing Arts Journal* 26/27: 163–73.

George, David (1996) 'Performance Epistemology', *Performance Research* 1(1) (Spring): 16–25.

Kostelanetz, Richard (ed.) (1980) *Scenarios: Scripts to Perform*, New York: Assembling Press.

Marranca, Bonnie (1996) *Ecologies of Theatre*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Mignot, Dorine (ed.) (1994) *Gary Hill*, Amsterdam: Stedlijk Museum.

(1998)

'Dance, Writing and Unsettled Bodies'

"Dance, Writing and Unsettled bodies"

Intervju med Ric Allsopp

Torill Braaten

Teatret har etter nasjonsbyggingen i stor grad ivaretatt tradisjonen hvor kunsten er autonom og skjermet. I den grad det tar opp samfunnsproblemer, som incest og vold og slike ting, er det som noe som angår den enkelte og enkeltmennesker i mellom. Performance art og performance relaterte forestillinger har i større grad befattet seg med samfunnsinstitusjonene og samfunnet som system. De samme tendensene kan vi se innen dans. Når dans ikke lenger forholder seg ene og alene til sin egen tradisjon, hvilke strategier kan man da bruke for å definere samtidens dans? Hvilke kompositoriske og estetiske kilder benytter dagens koreografer og skapere av dans seg av?

10

Du nevner den franske forfatteren Maurice Blanchot; hans kommentar at ingenting kan vises uten språk, og at "skrift forutgår ethvert fenomen". Leser du Blanchot's kommentar som et forsøk på å videreføre og fornye en ren kunstnerisk tradisjon, eller er det et angrep på tradisjonen?
Mange av de sentrale aktørene innen kunst og filosofi i det tyvende århundre har vært politisk aktive eller hatt et politisk engasjement. Men deres filosofiske eller kunstneriske arbeider er blitt lukket inne i et eget system for å holde kunsten ren.

Jeg er ikke så kjent med Blanchots biografi. Vanligvis er det bare skrevet – Blanchot, forfatter og kritiker, født i 1907, hans liv er i sin helhet viet litteraturen og til den stillhet som er dens særpreg. Hva han sier, er

at det er umulig å oppnå stillhet, men han forholder seg likevel til begjæret etter stillheten. Og også problemet med inskripsjonen. I det perspektivet ser jeg letingen etter form. Danseren innskriver rommet, men i samme øyeblikk som inskripsjonen skjer, er den også borte. Men begjæret er der selvfølgelig etter å bevare denne inskripsjonen som idealisert dans.

Jeg har brukt utsagnet i forhold til arbeider av blant annet William Forsythe, som helt klart kan settes inn i et historisk perspektiv, som sporer denne interessen i vanskelighetene med dans som en type inskripsjon.

Meg Stuarts samarbeid med Gary Hill befatter seg også med begjæret etter å holde noe fast og samtidig det umulige i det. Be-

gjæret etter innskriften som et kjennetegn for det spesifikt historiske eller individuelle eller hva det nå måtte være. Og det problematiske med dette eller det umulige. En kan spore denne interessen tilbake til *Incidental Catastrophe*, en video basert på *Thomas de Obscure* av Blanchot, om en mann som blir besatt av språket, av lesning. Forholdet mellom ordet, det talte og kroppen.

I videoen ligger Gary Hill naken på en strand og han blir så skyllet i land, inn på et bad hvor boksidene er projisert opp på veggen. I videoen *Splayed Mind Out* "skriver" Meg Stuart ord på ryggen med sin venstre hånd. Dette blir tatt opp på video og vist på veggen bak. Imens kommer det en annen danser, aktor inn på scenen og forsvinner i skjermen på en måte som jeg ikke er helt sikker på hvordan de har fått til. Hun kommer altså inn i skjermen og så forsvinner hun bare. Så her har vi hele problematikken med undersokelsen av inskripsjonen i form av å etterlate et spor på en overflate og på en skjerm og bestemmelsen av en overflate hvor inskripsjonen kan foregå. Også det problematiske mellom begjæret etter taushet og umuligheten i å få tilfredsstilt dette begjæret.

Det er kanskje umulig å oppnå stillhet, enten man ser det som et sluttpunkt eller noe man ønsker å jobbe ut fra. Men jeg har oppfattet Meg Stuarts arbeider slik at hun arbeider i ruinene, alle posisjoner er knust. Ikke bare posisjonen til ballerinaen, men også posisjonen til betrakteren. Det blir en slags omvendt minimalisme. Men hun konstruerer ikke nye posisjoner i disse ruinene, hun forholder seg til feltet og undersoker det gjennom kroppens bevegelser.
Ja, det er også på denne måten jeg bruker termen "ecology". Ikke som en leting etter det essensielle eller noe universielt, en tilbakevenden til "det rene". Jeg anvender det heller ikke i retning av "green-peace" direkte politiske aksjoner. I England skjer det interessante ting mellom performance og "ecology", mellom kunstneriske arbeider

og direkte aksjoner, strategier for å motstå det som blir benevnt som inngripen på demokratiets vegne på felles grunn, slik som bygging av broer, tunneler.

Min andre store inspirasjonskilde er amerikaneren Charles Olsson, dikter og skribent. Han ledet Black Mountain College i perioden da Rauschenberg var student og Cunningham underviste der. Cage var også innom der en tid. Olsson samarbeidet både med Cunningham og andre dansere og jeg tror også han samarbeidet fysisk i noen av det en i ettertid kan kalle happenings

> what we do not know of ourselves/
>
> of who they are who lie/
>
> coiled or unflown/
>
> in the marrow of the bone/

som ble arrangert ved Black Mountain under sommerskolene i 1949 og 1950. Aksjoner hvor Cage og Rauschenberg var involvert, sammen med Cunningham, Olsson og andre diktere, som Robert Duncan. Olsson utviklet det han kalte for "field composition" eller "projecting verse" og han var en av de første til å bruke en slags idé om det postmoderne, rundt 1950, så dette er lenge før de fleste andre begynte å tenke på denne type anliggender eller på denne tilstanden. Han bruker begrepet både som en idé om en periode etter det moderne, men også som en idé om hvordan de ulike elementene innen et felt forholder seg til hverandre, på en måte som er ganske parallell til det en kan kalle Cage's estetikk.

> And the boat,/
>
> how he swerves it to avoid the
>
> yelping rocks/
>
> where the tidal river rushes

Han har en slags sirkulær forståelse av vår konseptualisering av verden og vårt behov for å representere denne som er basert på forståelse, ikke bare en konseptuell forståelse, men gjennom hvordan vi er i verden, med Merleau-Ponty's ord "our being in the world".

11

Denne tenkningen har hatt stor betydning for mitt eget arbeide; en komposisjon som er åpen, "field composition", å prøve og bevege seg ut av en tilnærming hvor teori og praksis, performance og teater, blir sett på som motsetninger. Jeg har forsøkt å bevege meg ut i et mer åpent felt, som ikke bare består av tenkning, men tenkning om praksiser og jeg har også ønsket å involvere meg i praksis. Olsson var den som begynte å kartlegge det territoriet for meg. Hans *Maximus Poems* har helt klare inspirasjonskilder. Men Olsson har en blekere visjon kan en si enn Ezra Pound, som er en av disse "fedrene" som han omtaler dem som selv. Olsson mener Pound mislyktes i sitt forsøk på å holde ting sammen. Men Pound så fortsatt på den vestlige sivilisasjonen som en mulighet, ikke på samme måte som T.S. Eliot gjorde ved å vende tilbake til visse verdier, men som en mulighet for å holde det hele sammen. Olsson, på grunn av det som skjedde fra 1933 og fremover, ser den vestlige sivilisasjon, hele dette prosjektet fra grekerne av, som noe han omtaler som "the junk of history". På liknende måte som Walter Benjamin, "the rubbish has been blown". Så han begynner derfor å tenke på hvordan vi kan forholde oss til denne verden når det ikke finnes noen konstruksjoner å forholde seg til lenger. Hvilke strategier er det mulig å bringe inn, som kan ha noen verdi? Så han beveger seg inn i "field composition", noe som er et forsøk på å bringe sammen forskjellige typer stoff, historisk, arkeologisk, ut fra havnebyen Gloster i Massachusetts, hvor han bodde. Han så på Gloster som en inngangsport for en mengde med idéer, ikke bare fra det sekstende århundrede, men også fra vikingene og tidligere. Han bygger opp et felt av assos-

dwells in that wood where

shapes hide/

who is this woman or this man

whose face we give name to,

whose shoulder/

we bite, what landscape/

figures ride small horses over,

what bloody stumps/

these dogs have, how they tear

the golden cloak/

iasjoner fra dette bestemte punktet Gloster. Om hans arbeide som kunstner virkelig lyktes vet jeg ikke, men hans idéer er interessante. Og de har hatt stor innflytelse på visse områder. Innen poesien selvfølgelig, men også som vilkår for strategier for hvordan en kan tenke innen scenekunst. Enda mer i dag, hvor vi har så mye tilgjengelig, hvordan kan vi bringe materialet sammen uten å gå tilbake til noen universell eller essensiell forståelse. Eller på den annen side forbindelser som oppstår mellom ting plassert innen en ramme. Olsson forsøker å finne forbindelser på en måte som kan minne om Pounds arbeide, men som er noe han har funnet i den pre-sokratiske filosofien. Han har influert min måte å tenke på, men også hvordan jeg ønsker å presentere stoffet; hvordan jeg legger ut materialet. Jeg synes det er interessant å tenke på historien på den måten han gjør. Han sier "junk of history", men i virkeligheten har han brukt enormt mye tid på å sjekke den opp! Igjen er det snakk om en inskripsjon, det er en oppfattelse av hva som har foregått som bevares i inskripsjonen. Det forsvinner ikke bare på grunn av en holdning som er herskende i samtiden. Det finnes faktisk der og det er viktig å gjøre bruk av det. Det finnes ikke lenger et lineært syn på historien, men det er absolutt noe som finnes rundt oss på den måten at en kan plukke opp og bruke hva en vil. Raimund Hoghe's forestillinger er et godt eksempel hvor han trekker forbindelser til historien og til de argumenter som ligger der.

Det blir et skifte fra avantgardebevegelsen som blir antatt å være i front av en lineær utvikling til kunstnere som tenker kontekst. Men det er også kommet inn et skifte i hva som kreves av pub-

likum. Raimund Hoghe's forestilling hvor han la
stor vekt på det rituelle, men også denne kon-
trasten mellom den beinharde virkeligheten som
ble presentert i tekstmaterialet og denne kvali-
teten, som han selv benevner det, i slagerne av
Doris Day, Marlene Dietrich og andre som kom-
mer som perler på en snor gjennom forestillingen.
Jeg tenker også på forestillingen som Zer°
Visibility viste flere steder i Norge; except that I
would like to be rid of it, hvor publikum ikke kan
sitte og velge fokus, men blir dradd inn og ut av
forestillingen. En må lese av flere lag samtidig og
det blir mer det en kan kalle et ambient forhold.
Jeg synes det er interessant hvordan Mer-
leau-Ponty går inn i den transcendentale
fenomenologien, i denne idéen om at en
kan gå tilbake til en slags umiddelbar over-
ført kommunikasjon mellom tilskuer og det
som skal oppfattes, og jeg mener han foran-
drer dette i noen grad. Han jafser nærmest
inn i dette og driver det hele mer i retning
av det dynamiske og det interaktive. Det in-
teraktive er vanskelig å snakke om nå. Men
diskusjonen om tilstedeværelse er gjort mer
kompleks.

En kan snakke om dette ut fra begrepet
om "the unsettled body". Hvordan kroppen
blir fragmentert i måten den blir distribuert
på, på forskjellig vis. På en eller annen måte
må vi forholde oss til denne mangelen på
forståelse for helhet eller sammenheng og
hvordan dette henger sammen med ned-
brytelsen av perspektivet. I størstedelen av
den estetiske dansen, for å kategorisere det,
er forholdet mellom utøver og tilskuer
utrolig tradisjonelt. Det er statisk, bygget på
en visuell konstruksjon som har å gjøre med
utviklingen av hele det tredimensjonale
lineære perspektivet. Forholdet mellom til-
skueren og bildet er standard vertikalt, så
hvis vi ikke står og ser dans, kanskje vi skul-
le, he-he, er vi fortsatt i det forholdet. Det
var også grunnen til at jeg nevnte Rausch-
enberg. Hans idé om at det flate bildets spill
ville ødelegge dette forholdet. Det blir i
steden en overflate som er et felt hvor du
kan bringe inn flere ting og som kan bli sett

fra en hvilken som helst retning. Så umid-
delbart må en tenke på hva som skjer når en
rokker ved det tradisjonelle bildet, den vel-
kjente og normative måten å se på dans på.
Hva skjer når det forsvinner? Hva du sier
om tekno og ambi-
ent influert scene-
kunst hvor en må in-
volvere seg på alle
andre måter enn den
rene visuelle , er klart
en retning. Andre
retninger er de ting-
ene som Steve Pax-
ton gjør eller Judson
Church og den type
eksperimenter som
foregår der, hvor dis-
tinksjonen mellom
den som observerer
og det som blir observert, tilskuer og utover
eller danser og ikke-danser, fullstendig for-
svinner. Der er faktisk ingenting å se, bare
ting å erfare og du forholder deg til en
aktivitet som det å gå eller det å løfte. Så på
en måte hva som blir viktig er ikke hvordan
det blir konstruert innen en tradisjonell
visuell ramme, men det blir helt enkelt fore-
slått som en aktivitet som har å gjøre med
vekt og tyngde og overraskende handlinger.
Dette konstrueres ikke utfra et visuelt syns-
punkt, men det konstrueres utfra et fysisk
punkt, en annen innfallsvinkel.

Det er gjennom kroppen, for å følge
Merleau-Ponty, at vi har opphold i verden,
"our being in the world". Og det er også en
gradvis forståelse for kroppen som et sted
for flere ulike typer av informasjon, flere
subjektiviteter, flere tekster, flere slags rom.
Selvfølgelig kan vi se posisjoner, vi kan se
det statiske, men vi ser det på en måte som
tilhører fotografiet, en bevegelse tatt ut av
en sammenheng. Så for å forstå den posi-
sjonen, må en se på den spesielle prosessen
som ligger bak og hvordan det er konstruert
ut fra kroppen, kulturelle holdninger, tilhor-
ighet, det spesifikke som finnes rundt. En

> "The Praises"
>
> to dream takes no effort/
>
> to think is easy/
>
> to act is more difficult/
>
> but for a man to act after
>
> he has taken thought, this!/
>
> is the most difficult thing of all.

13

kan ikke se på disse forholdene som noe adskilt lenger. Bildet som interesserer meg, er denne idéen om en performance som noe konstant skiftende. Det er noe ikke-etablert som beveger seg i en kultur. Og den beveger seg ikke rundt som en lukket boks, men gjør linker utad i alle sine bevegelser, i kulturen.

Men ikke så mye som en motreaksjon lenger, nå er det mer et forsøk på å gjøre noe i nuenec. Så det man ser er kanskje at etter en lang periode hvor teatret har tatt opp strategier fra performance, har nå performance forestillinger begynt å skjele til teatret?

Ja, jeg har nettopp vært på en konferanse i Hamburg hvor nettopp dette ble diskutert. Igjen må jeg si noe om konteksten fordi dette var et møte for et nettverk bestående av primært tyske, sveitsiske, og østerrikske performance kunstnere. Det foregikk i Hamburg, det var en ganske kontinental forsamling, den delen av Europa. Men diskusjonen gikk mye på distinksjonene mellom performance og teatralitet. Og det som ble vist var helt fra det som absolutt fornekter det teatrale, fordi det blir sett på som en innflytelse som forstener, altså i tråd med Michael Frieds berømte essay, til det som absolutt undersøkte rommet mellom det teatrale og performance art eller hva det nå måtte være. Og dette er veldig interessant i forhold til Paul McCartys arbeide, han arbeider hovedsaklig med video nå. Jeg har sett hans arbeider i København. Lousiana har ikke det en kan kalle en samling; men flere enkeltverk, som alle omhandler misbruk av barn. Saken jeg så på Kampnagel hadde mer å gjøre med kunsthistorien. Han ser tydeligvis på den som junk som han sabler ned på alle mulige måter, men han gjør det innen en høyst teatral konstruksjon. Han bygger et sett med en rollefigur. Denne har store gummihansker, store ører, parykk og arbeider med kunstobjekter som lerreter og pensler som alle er enorme. Så det er litt tegneserieaktig, men det blir virkelig

forstyrrende etter hvert. På den ene siden er det en slags cool performance, hans arbeide er innen performance som medium. På samme tid er han til de grader teatral.

Han sitter ved bordet og begynner å stabbe en kniv ned mellom fingrene, du kjenner sikkert til Marina Abramovic's performance hvor hun gjor dette. Blodet spruter ut og det er veldig morsomt. Du får referansene, kunsthistoriske referanser, action painting og tidlige performance art og det er veldig underholdende fordi du får disse referansene i spill med denne tegneseriefiguren. Men etter en stund begynner han med denne store kjøttkniven og hakker løs. Og selvfølgelig på grunn av disse enormt tykke gummihanskene, tar det år og dag. Men han bare fortsetter og mer og mer blod tyter ut. Han spiller virkelig, du vet at dette er en illusjon, men likevel blir det veldig plagsomt etter hvert. Og folk går. Det gir denne dype reaksjonen, enda du vet at han bare hakker løs på tykk gummi og at hanskene er fulle av tomat saus eller hva det nå er. Men etter som tiden går, forandrer dette bildet seg fra en slags parodi til at selve aksjonen blir veldig forstyrrende i seg selv. Han er veldig interessant i måten han plasserer seg selv mellom teater og teatralitet og performance.

Teater har på en måte forsvunnet som noe interessant i England, det er ikke der ting skjer. Det som er interessant ut fra en konseptuell synsvinkel, skjer innen installasjonskunst, live art, og tidsbaserte arbeider. Men som du sier, det er en økende interesse for teatrale virkemidler. Dette skifter. Der er visse typer koder hvor det er absolutt umulig å snakke om teater på noen meningsfull måte og så plutselig er det fullt mulig igjen. Jeg tror det er der vi befinner oss, enten i muséet eller som Rauschenberg foreslo, forflytter du deg konstant mellom meninger eller mellom konstruksjoner, mellom identiteter og mellom representasjoner. Så disse klisjéene som navigasjon får økende betydning som strategier. Hvordan er du i stand

14

til å navigere som kunstner eller som menneske igjennom det du har tilgjengelig?

Grabber du simpelten tak i noe velkjent og blir der eller finner du måter å navigere på? Det bringer oss igjen tilbake til grekerne, til Dionysos' styrmann som sovner og faller i sjøen. Og de kan ikke finne ham, slik at de får lagt ham til hvile. Dette blir et interessant bilde på noe som ikke er lukket, noe som ikke kan bli ført til sin ende. Denne sjelen blir en vandrende sjel som konstant må navigere seg selv.

Ric Allsopp er en av redaktørene av tidsskriftet Performance Research. Han er tilknyttet Dartington College of Arts, Devon og Scool for New Dance Development, Amsterdam. For tiden forbereder han et Performance Writing Symposium (Utrecht 1998) og en konferanse med temaet Ecology/Performance Art (Tyskland/Danmark 1998/1999)

Tekstblokkene er tatt fra Archaeologist of Morning (ABCs 2 og The Praises) *av* Charles Olsson.

Strategisk Markedsføring
Presse og Informasjon
Grafisk Design
Massekommunikasjon

DYNAMOBERGEN

DITT ENESTE
KOMMUNIKASJONSHUS

55 31 22 33

15

(1999)

'Performance Writing'

Performing Arts Journal 61, Vol.XXi, No.1 (January)

Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, pp.76-80

PERFORMANCE WRITING

Ric Allsopp

The relationship between writing and performance—the uses and applications of various writing practices for performance within the historical classifications of theatre, music, poetry, literature—has traditionally resolved itself in a variety of conventionalized (but not unproblematic) forms: the play text, the libretto, the lyric, and so on. The study of these forms has until relatively recently been divorced from the study of their performance: even contemporary work on the materiality of writing deriving from deconstructive philosophy and literary theory has largely confined itself to the space of the page. Writerly work that extends beyond the page has found itself either marginalized or ignored in terms of its exploration of relations between writing and performance. Yet at the latter end of the twentieth century we are surrounded by examples and models of such writerly performance work. In short the conventionalized (and therefore often unquestioned) relations between writing and performance are proving increasingly inadequate as interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary arts practices emerge in response to rapidly shifting cultures. Whatever the ambivalent indications of digital media, writing will certainly continue to develop as a technological medium, and as such, as performance—performance (in whatever form) will continue to be an increasingly complex interaction of signifying systems.

Since the mid-1990s the term "performance writing" has begun to have some currency in the area of experimental and contemporary performing arts, whether referring to an emergent field of practice or an emergent academic discipline. As the writer Caroline Bergvall has noted:

> Performance Writing explores relationships between textual and text-based work when developed in conjunction with other media and discourses. Performance Writing opens the investigation of formal and ideological strategies which writers and artists develop textually in response or in reaction to their own time and their own fields.[1]

Both theoretical interest in "writing" itself as a subject;[2] its placing as a distinctive feature within modernist avant-garde practice;[3] the increasingly cross-disciplinary and fragmentary condition of the arts; and the pervasiveness of the terms of

"performance" as a means of reading diverse cultural practices, have provided a rich ground for the emergence of performance writing as a practice and as a way of framing practice. The term performance writing itself, while inevitably evolving into yet another category that refers to an increasingly fixed body of work, is—at least now—still an unstable and exploratory term that attempts to hold in tension both writing and its performance, performance and its writing. It is a frame through which a range of writing and performance practices are brought into view—the texualities of sonic, visual, graphic and movement performances; the performance of sonic, visual, graphic and movement texts.

As a frame performance writing also provides a means for rethinking and understanding a range of arts and performance practices that have remained silent or mute in the face of more traditional ways of looking and reading. Performance writing effectively both problematizes and widens the discourse that surrounds the textuality of contemporary arts practice and allows otherwise marginal and peripheral practices into the field of performance research. While the danger of any new discipline or new means of framing work is that the frame itself tends to impose restrictive limits and conventions on practices that were otherwise unimpeded; the benefit is its ability to map and link practices which are often unaware of each other and the new directions and initiatives which can emerge from such integration and framing. Performance writing is the continuing and transforming relationship between the two terms of its discourse, proposed both as boundary markers and as two terminal points in an open circuit across which the luminous arc of performance writings take form.

The origins of performance writing must be placed within the broad historical context of writerly performance work within and across many disciplines and media. But it also has a more localized history and academic setting in relation to Dartington, a specialist arts college in Devon, England, where writing in relation to music, to theatre, and to the visual arts and performance, has in one way or another been a consistent and integral feature of its academic program since the mid-1970s with links back to the founding of the present Dartington Estate in 1925.[4] For example, "writing for performance" was an essential specialism in the newly-established theatre degree course (1976 onwards). It was not predicated primarily on ideas of playwriting or the literary study of playscripts or dramatic texts, but on the continuing question (and questioning) of the relationship of writing to performance work, particularly (at that time) on the uses of writing for performance that emphasized the making of "physical, non-narrative and visual" experimental theatre and "new dance" work, and its relations to wider social and politic contexts.

The gradual departure of writing (at least in terms of experimental theatre work in the U.K.) from the norms of playwriting and the forms of drama associated with conventional theatre and theatre spaces during the 1970s and 1980s, was reflected in the continuing and unresolvable debate around which preposition or connective would best characterize the relation between writing and performance: writing for

performance, which began to suggest a sense of writing in the service of performance, writing and performance, or writing as performance.

During the 1970s the theatre course at Dartington had looked back for inspiration to the writerly models and examples of work at Black Mountain College in North Carolina. In 1952, the poet and then dean of Black Mountain College, Charles Olson, wrote a course description entitled "The Act of Writing in the Context of Post-Modern Man," which incidentally might not only have contained one of the earliest sustained usages of the term "post-modern," but also provided a marker from which an idea of performance writing could emerge. Olson wrote:

> The engagement of each class . . . is the search for a methodology by which each person in the class, by acts of writing and critique on others' acts of writing, may more and more find the kinetics of experience disclosed—the kinetics of themselves as persons as well as of the stuff they have to work on, and by.[5]

There are (at least) two key ideas here: (i) "acts of writing" which clearly places writing as performative, as engaged in physical process, which leads to (ii) a "kinetics of experience"—the literal "movement of material" or "performance of writing" that is found and materialized. As Olson saw it elsewhere: kinetics as a direct transfer of energy from "where the poet got it . . . by way of the poem itself, all the way over to the reader."[6] The sense of the materiality of writing and the essentially performative quality of the materials of writing, Olson also describes as being "handled as a series of objects in field in such a way that a series of tensions are made to hold, and to hold exactly inside the content and context of the poem which has formed itself, through the poet, and then, into being."[7]

Forty-five years later Olson's course outline still has a contemporary resonance to its vision and its "placing" of the act of writing. Its conceptual inheritor, performance writing is now only able to locate itself as part of the atomization of literature, music, theatre, and so on. In that, of course it aligns itself "with the aesthetics of suspicion, disruption and reappraisal which have to such a large extent determined the frame of mind of this century's effusion of experimentality."[8] The first Performance Writing Symposium, an international gathering held at Dartington in 1996, emphasized the materiality of writing and introduced performance writing as it presented itself at that time:

The field of performance writing defines writing in its widest sense as the investigation of the performance of language. By acknowledging that textual events are produced not only through a syntactical and semantic exploration of language but also through the impact of its material treatments, Performance Writing is highlighting the great diversity of artistic and writerly practices, both within and outside established literary traditions, which rely on the use of text and textual elements. Forms of theatre, of poetry, of installation art, of video art, of animation, of soundworks and bookworks and electronic arts that share and forward an interest

in experimenting with language arts thus become part of one and the same debate. What is writing? where does it take place? become once again fundamental questions when aspects of sonic writing, of visual writing, of installed writing, of physical writing or even durational writing are practices defined alongside the linguistic and the literary. If pen and paper are still considered the abc of writing, its full alphabet has long since exploded into an array of surprising permutations."

If performance writing marks the terminal points in between which a field of work crackles and sparks into life, then this is not primarily due to the framework, which only gives some shape and form to a diverse set of writerly practices that are now performing both on and beyond the page in wide range of media and for an increasingly wide audience. The technologies of writing and performance as communicative systems point towards the performativity of the text: writing as it performs itself within its own terms, within its own field. As Patrice Pavis has noted, it is the interaction of signifying systems within performance, and not their history, that is offered to the spectator and that produces meaning.[10] The term performance writing brings into focus that interactivity, the transformative play of text as performance.

NOTES

1. Caroline Bergvall, Key Note Paper for Performance Writing Symposium, Dartington, U.K., 1996.

2. Heralded by Marshall McLuhan in the early 1960s and approached from philosophical (Jacques Derrida), structural (Roland Barthes), cultural (Walter Ong), feminist (Hélène Cixous), and technological (McLuhan) perspectives.

3. For example, in the work of Marcel Duchamp, Antonin Artaud, Gertrude Stein.

4. Dartington was founded as a utopian community for rural regeneration and the promotion of the arts by the American heiress Dorothy Elmhirst and her husband Leonard Elmhirst in 1925.

5. Charles Olson, "The Act of Writing in the Context of Post-Modern Man" (1952) in *Olson: The Journal of the Charles Olson Archives*, ed. George Butterick (Univ. of Connecticut Press), No. 2 Autumn 1974, p. 28.

6. Charles Olson, "Projective Verse" (1950) in *Selected Writings*, ed. R. Creeley (New Directions, 1966).

7. Ibid.

8. Bergvall, op. cit.

9. The Symposium was co-organized by Ric Allsopp, writer, and Caroline Bergvall, present Subject Director of the Performance Writing degree course at Dartington College of Arts.

10. See *Performance Texts*, eds. Michael Issacharoff and Robin Jones (Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), p. 86.

RIC ALLSOPP is a founding partner of Writing Research Associates and Joint Editor of the contemporary performance journal *Performance Research* published by Routledge. He currently holds a Research Fellowship at Dartington College of Arts. He initiated the 1996 Performance Writing Symposium and is working with Caroline Bergvall on a second Performance Writing Symposium, "In the Event of Text: Ephemeralities of Writing," to be held in Utrecht in April 1999.

035

(1999)

'On Immobility'

THE TREE COMPANIES THAT I WISH TO
REFER TO IN THIS PAPER TAKE SUCH
DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO THE PROBLEMS
OF PRESENCE AND REPRESENTATION AND
THEIR UTILISATION OF TIME, SPACE, BODY,
OBJECT, TEXT - THAT IT IS DIFFICULT FOR
ME TO PLACE THEM TOGETHER UNDER A
CATEGORY OF "ICONOCLASTIC THEATRE".
I AM INTERESTED IN THE RELATIONS
BETWEEN PRESENCE AND
REPRESENTATION, BETWEEN PERIPHERY
AND CENTRE, BETWEEN BODY AND
ENVIRONMENT

BAK-truppen *Good Good Very Good*

Ric Allsopp
On Immobility

Tram Track I:

I am sitting at a table in the cafe of the newly completed Tanzhaus in Düsseldorf. It is raining. I am sitting parallel to the large glass front wall of the building which looks out onto a courtyard bounded by iron gates and railings. The Tanzhaus occupies what used to be the central tram depot in Düsseldorf. The tram tracks, which enter the courtyard through the gates and fan out into single tracks each with its own separate entrance to the depot, now disappear under the floor of the new art space, stopped in their tracks. The friend with whom I sit remarks that it is only ever one two ideas that really alter things for the individual, that open up new landscapes; the rest disappear without trace. Outside in the rain men and women wait surrounded with bags of cheap consumer goods for the coaches that will take them back trough the slow hours and days to the east, to the margins and peripheries of Europe.

Iconoclasm:

The tree companies that I wish to refer to in this paper - BAK-truppen, Societas Raffaello Sanzio, and Goat Island - take such different approaches to the problems of presence and representation and their utilisation of time, space, body, object, text - that it is difficult for me to place them together under a category of "iconoclastic theatre". I am interested in the relations between presence and representation, between periphery and centre, between body and environment. I am

not so interested in whether the theatre work that has been brought together to form the Iconoclastic season of work is either "iconoclastic" in the sense of "destroying images" or is "a new phenomenon or force in theatre". In many ways the work seems to reinforce the idea of image in its exploration of the representational conditions of theatre. Nor am I so interested in what seems to me to be a partial and reductive division of theatre making into categories of "mainstream" and "post mainstream"- categories which all too easily reflect a geography of performance determined by a network of producers and producing venues.

I see the terms of presence and representation, periphery and centre, body and environment (which lie at the heart of questions concerning theatre and performance) no longer in opposition to each other but as describing a dynamic and fluid field of practice and enquiry that reflects the unstable, unsettled, dispersed, contingent and problematic cultural conditions that typify a post-industrial, postmodern sensibility - a sensibility which is no longer located in the urban centres of Europe and America but that is becoming increasingly globalised.

Iconoclasm understood as the destruction of images - a destruction that hopes to bring about radical change - is no longer a possibility under these conditions - or where it is, it operates at a level of detail and specificity that is more or less invisible to the general view. As Baudrillard has pointed out, art has already disappeared as a symbolic pact: "the capacity of art to negate reality, to set up an 'other scene' in opposition to reality where things obey a higher set of rules, is gone" (1994:14). There is now only the possibility of setting up temporary zones of consensus (as Edgar Jager has proposed in his polemic on "ambient theatre" (1997) - at least that is, outside of mass media. The project of art is to take up the fragmented world and find its living connections not in an attempt to reconstruct ideological monuments - the art object or performance as "symbolic pact" - but to create a temporary zone of coherence. Such meeting places or temporary zones are essentially localised, sometimes manifesting within the boundaries of the institutionalised art world, sometimes elsewhere. In this sense a marginal theatre exists. It is not at the level of "theatre" though, but on the wider level of developments in new technologies, in cultural or political alignments, that our views of "the real", " the virtual", the meeting place of images, of representations (the sites of the body, of text, of performance) are confronted and transformed.

This marginal theatre, which partially inherits the aesthetic traditions of experimental theatre, is not predicated on a historicist view of theatre, nor on a regional or geographical view of peripheries or margins but on difference - the presence of different voices and visions - as much within the centre as on the peripheries. It is predicated on questions that have had no precedent within the discipline, on cultural, political and technological perceptions that shift the discussion away from the conventions of the discipline, and locate in ideas of

slippage, of defocusing, of distribution, of refusal or resistance; on a more profound shift of values, of attitudes towards visuality, textuality, identity and embodiment - in short on the recognition of difference at all levels.

Knut-Ove Arntzen has proposed an aesthetics of equivalence where the elements of theatre are manifested in non-hierarchical relations and where a "system of axes" focus the point of gravity between equivalent elements according to the particular circumstances of the theatre event (1990:44-6). This equivalence extends to textual, visual, physical strategies. The relation between text and image in terms of dramaturgy is also equivalent: the operations used to develop text are the operations used to develop image. The strategies are deconstructive - recognising the ideologies and assumptions that make up both text and image: the textuality of images, the visuality of text. The distinction between hierarchical and non-hierarchical theatres that Knut-Ove Arntzen proposes provides a means of understanding the differences between the work of Raffaello Sanzio and Goat Island - both of whom work (over extended time periods) to construct points of engagement with the zero condition of hierarchical theatre - and of BAK-truppen whose equivalent and non-hierarchical dramaturgy would seem to approach the zero condition of theatre from an altogether more arbitrary and contingent direction.

Heiner Müller noted that "theatre has to find its zero degree again and again" and in their differences the three companies are primarily concerned with an exploration of the basic conditions of theatre - representation, physicality, identity, presence. If "theatre" no longer holds as a means of adequately describing or categorising the type of performance work that is proposed by BAK-truppen, Goat Island and Raffaello Sanzio - it is because "theatre" as a conventionalised means of seeing is no longer adequate to the conditions of contemporary culture or to the aesthetic explorations that these marginal theatre undertake.

This is not itself a new thought. The "post-dramaturgy", as Valentina Valentini has described it (1998) of Heiner Müller's work already steps outside the boundaries of theatre (not into "a post-mainstream" but into temporary and contingent zones of the performative). This marginal theatre steps into a non-synthetic and non-resolvable dramaturgy where the conventional terms visual, textual, somatic, perceptual, spatial are not replaced by a set of equivalent terms, but by a reduced and contingent sense of ambience, oscillation, indeterminacy, ephemerality. The elements of performance move trough a non-hierarchical equivalence to collapse into slippage, resonance, virtuality, vulnerability.

I see on the one hand a "theatre" shored up by the hollowness of its own conventions, shutting out the world, creating an "other scene" that ghosts the real, remembrance, repetition, interpretation, no longer a vision of possible worlds for use; on the other hand I see a "theatre which opens up a landscape, a vision of possible worlds, a zone of temporary coherence. Elements of both of these

views of theatre are present in all three companies: the ethical dimensions of Goat Island, the equivalences of BAK-truppen, the immobility of Raffaello Sanzio.

Heiner Müller felt that "theatre (was) necessary when history is stalled, because it foresees that which is missing; and that which should be aimed towards; whereas revolution has no more need of theatre." Valentini writes that:

> The dramaturgy of Heiner Müller must always be destabilised, avoiding any type of trait that could risk reducing it to a commercial formula, changing continuously, refusing to develop the function of spokesman of the powers that be, that have traditionally manipulated the theatre by way of reconciliation of conflicts and sublimation of rebellion. In order to contradict this edifying role (...) the writer must be capable of renewing the actual means of expression, capable of inventing new forms of writing for the stage, consistent with a pressing, traumatic and contradictory reality.(1998)

Such a view of the "post-dramaturgical" role would seem to inform the work of marginal or temporary theatres which operate within contradictory realities where immobility provides both a condition for its presence, and a condition for its absence.

IMMOBILITY:

The critic Jean-Louis Baudry has seen the immobility of the spectator as an essential condition of both "cinematic pleasure" and cinematic illusion. He has compared cinematic spectatorship to the prisoners in Plato's cave who chained and unable to move can only see what is in front of them, "because their chains will not let them turn their heads" (quoted in Walsh, 1997:40-45). By analogy immobility is perhaps also an essential condition of a conventional theatre: that is the immobility of the audience/spectator particularly in relation to the creation of an illusionistic and formal theatre. Immobility has several aspects: the immobility of the image (Raffaello Sanzio propose the creation of a timeless theatre "walled in and immobile" - a " barricaded theatre" in which the immobility of representation as image allows exploration of the very conditions by which representation and presence are made possible); the immobility of the spectator which allows the illusionary effect of theatre to take place and also becomes an essential condition of the act of theatre; the conventional immobility of the theatre space (from 17th century onwards), and its inability to maintain aesthetic distance and coherence if this immobility is challenged. It is perhaps interesting to note that as in forms of popular theatre such as vaudeville "during the 'primitive' period (of cinema) the space of the film theatre and the screen space were clearly separated - with viewer free to interact, come and go, and maintain a psychological distance from the image". (Walsh, 1997:40-45).

Heiner Müller talks of "the destruction of the prison that is society, history and ideology" - the immobilising accretions of ideologies and conventions. In the second act of Hamletmaschine, Ophelia declares "I will smash the instruments of my imprisonment to pieces; the chair, the table, the bed" - which are not only read as primary icons and elements of the everyday, but also the primary objects which imagery (and therefore ideology) gathers around within the theatre. For example the extraordinary image of the electrified bed in *Amleto*. Iconoclasm suggests the possibility of breaking with form, of breaking therefore with that which is immobile, and of creating a theatre which takes on discontinuity, mobility and a play of equivalence. Both Goat Island and Raffaello Sanzio choose precisely an immobility of spectatorship, and an immobility of image circumscribed by the setting to investigate the conditions of for example physical impossibility, repetition or endurance, or the autistic silence of the text and the physicality of the actor.

In contrast to the cinema and the conventionalised theatre, interactive virtual realities establish a new relation between body of the viewer and the image. The spectator is no longer chained, immobilised, anaesthetised by the apparatus which serves him or her ready made images: and where she now "has to work, to speak, in order to see"; in these marginal theatres however, immobility remains an essential construct for understanding the conditions through which the image is made possible.

BODIES & CONDITIONS:

All three companies invite the spectator to address questions of the nature and operation of representation and physical presence in the work - a further zero-degree of theatre. In the introduction to *The Connected Body?* I wrote about the double status of the body as both representation and presence. This idea locates two states in an ambivalent and oscillating relationship - undecidable, and unresolvable. I think it is a useful construct with which to read the functions of body and image:

> The double status of the body in performance has become fundamental to its articulation in both modernist and post-modern practice. The body participates as a focus of experiment: as an experiential site - as presence, a dynamic, moving, transforming and resistant body; and as a site of representation - as reference, as object, as a complex of meanings. This oscillation of status resists any surety or fixity which might reduce the body in performance to either mere representation (the "reflection of an existing proposition as thought it were as fact" as Alan Read has put it) or simple biological presence (a notion of a transparent and immanent presentness). The body in twentieth century performance becomes an ambivalent site which offers modalities of presence and reference, of physical activity and image. (Allsopp, 1996:6).

Such a view proposes the unsettled or unstable body and the unsettled or unstable image as a condition of contemporary performance and theatre work. The deconstruction of the image as a potential carrier of ideologies and the questions that surround the representational functions of theatre and performance are I believe opened up by readings of the performance body in relation to image which treat those elements as both equivalent and inseparable.

In Raffaello Sanzio's *Amleto* the body of the performer is staged as the location of the performance image, determined as much by our presence as spectators as by the scenic environment he finds himself within. The immobility of the image constructed on an equivalence of the text "to be AND not to be" sets up an oscillating impasse between the actors physical presence (his attempt to reach an impossible clarity and transparency of being) and his image or representation (his attempts to use language to articulate his situation). The image of the whole, mirrored in the body of the actor, is hermetically sealed, literally playing within the proscenium - establishing an "other" illusionary scene - that sustains itself at a kind of zero-degree of representation. The image that is created by the dynamic between body and scenic environment renders him mute. There is an analogy with the linkage of batteries - the flow of electricity between terminals causing (e)motion, noise, explosions, the arcing between terminals, heat. The body of Horatio can never achieve a purely transparent presence - only a mediated presence inscribing and tracing itself within the "scene" that both frames it and immobilises it. The play of "to be AND not to be" - the play of graffiti on the wall - the constant slippage between the present and the absent. The whole "other scene" which is created between presence and representation is betrayed by "leakage": the leakages of the actor's body in piss, and excrement, the leakage of the voice in parallel with the leakage of electricity, of explosions, of gunfire - the "electrified" scene that determines the dynamic of the actor. We are forced to watch the hermetically sealed box of the set containing an almost sealed body; the sealed fluids of the batteries encased and immobilised - the flow of fluids from the broken light bulbs, the leaky body, the cupboard, the fingers that protrude from the metal slit in the metal "mother". The leaky body of Horatio, the body "turned inside-out" reveals in its traces (writing, blood, urine, excrement) the evidence of *Hamlet* as idea, as image.

The imprisonment and immobility of the body takes place on both conceptual and literal levels. We are sucked towards the mute space of the image - immobilised as viewers as Horatio is immobilised as actor by the condition of theatre - neither presence nor representation - a mute inscription "walled-in and immobile, eternal as an inscription on a tombstone" as Valentini has put it (1997:58) - erased to a single letter A which homophonically reads as an italicised *è*: to be. The letter, the literal, is both beginning and ending immobilised in the present and imprinted on the back of the actor by the anarchic machine of his theatre linking him to his determining and "originary" text. The theatre of Raffaello Sanzio challenges the process of representation itself even tough it has to do so through rep-

resentation. Philip Auslander has spoken of this as "... an elusive and fragile discourse that is always forced to walk a tightrope between complicity and critique".

In the theatre of Goat Island we watch ourselves watching the image-flow of the performance space. Immobility is what we are pushed up against - the Memory Man in *How Dear to Me...* , the limits of endurance in *It's Shifting Hank* as they perform the crawl or as Joe Ben lifts his head from the cubic foot of water for the ninth time, as the impossibility of Tom bringing the boat nearer becomes the moment that oscillates been presence and absence, between presence and it's memory. It is a theatre that constantly re-examines the moments of immobility between risk and control, which is constantly forcing and us as complicit spectators back those points of immobility trough which the moral and ethical dimensions of our lives begin to open. In this sense I see Goat Island's work not as iconoclastic, not "breaking" images, but testing their resistance (and thus political use) against the realities and values that determine us. The resistant (not but "leaky") body pushed toward the impossible movement, the dynamics of repetition and endurance, as the performer move through moments of representation, of characterisation. The repetition of the image - as the means of a "resistant" theatre of the body - is touched upon in Matthew Goulish's (continuing) series of "Microlectures".

> (A producer named Rollo went to see *It's Shifting Hank*)
> Rollo said: "What is the reason for all this repetition?"
> And I said: "What repetition?"
> (1997:95)

The concern with repetition (with immobility in my sense) becomes an opening into the "other" the possibility of moving trough into another landscape, another way of understanding the immobility and impossibility of our situation. A way charged with hope. In "Repetition & Impossibility" Mathew Goulish writes that:

> ...(If) we picture our lives taking place on a calendar - a desk calendar, the kind with one date on each page, and all the pages stacked up - if we picture each day of our lives taking place on the surface of one of these pages - and we drill out and remove a core sample of this calendar at any particular moment - for example, the moment when one wakes up in the morning and gets out of bed - then we line up all these moments in a row - one could see oneself in a kind of film, each frame of which shows a different picture of one getting out of bed in the morning. In this way, one could say, "I am always waking up. I am always getting out of bed. Every time it's different. This is my life." (1997:98)

The slow and meticulous process of image making trough bricolage, through repetition, trough copying and imitation begins to open up into embodiment, or what

Carol Becker called in relation to their work, the "physicality of ideas" - finding a form to "accommodate the mess".

Accommodation - the housing of the image, the immobility of the theatre is what in many senses the theatre of BAK-truppen resists in their (by comparison) spontaneous compositions in relation to given spaces, to given starting points. For BAK-truppen step across the boundaries of expectation in dictating and gesturing to the play of everyday life - the performativity of the real. Or rather BAK-truppen come closer to an "ambient theatre", to creating temporary zones of performance, temporary shelters and accommodations. As has often been pointed out there is no attempt to seduce the audience into any kind of illusion - what you see is what you get, and as such what we get is a another perspective on immobility - the zero degree of the space and time of the performance constantly brought into question. Edgar Jager in his polemic on "ambient theatre" describes the impact of BAK-truppen "behaving as if there was no theatre and no time span" (1997), questioning the relationship between image space and audience.

The theatre of BAK-truppen seems to me, in its use of a strategy of equivalence to come much closer to the notion of the *dérive* - the drift and slippage of imagery that challenges our expectations and ideas of spectatorship and immobility, of image and immobility, and in doing so maps a psychogeography of ambient performance or ambulant performance based around embodied and decentered subjectivities.

Amelia Jones speaks of "the new experience of subjectivity as embodied rather than transcendental, as in process, as engaged with and contingent with others in the world and as multiply identified rather than reducible to a single 'universal' image of the self". (1998:197) Trough a strategy of responding to the dynamics of particular space /site/ circumstance BAK-truppen approach the idea of an open and ambient theatre that sets up a temporary shelter or site within which an event can take place.

What is the place of the text in these three theatres? How does text operate? In the work of Raffaello Sanzio the originary text of *Hamlet* has become mute: the possibilities of text as (say) dialogue, as a means of communication between the personae of the play, are shut down. Like the image of the battery, text is treated as a stored, repressed fluid that leaks out of the body of the actor in sporadic monosyllabic utterance, or erupts in a violence of self-inscription on the body of the actor and of the walls of the cell (battery?) that he inhabits: a graffiti which trough transliteration and gradual erasure reduces text to the primary letter "A". Text performs itself literally trough flowing onto those spaces and surfaces of the theatre where text is conventionally absent. The muted /autistic body of the actor forces the text to reveal itself *on* rather than *in* the body, to appear as the writing on the wall, the remains of a physical action.

By contrast the multiple, prolific and appropriated text of Goat Island serve as collages of memory, identity, of fragmentary and fragmenting narratives. Text as utterance echoes the limits of physical endurance that the actors push their bodies towards. The effect is of a textual fabric that supports a broadly narrative movement, which in turn forms a vocal counterpoint to the physical imagery of the performance, and which stays within the conventions of a theatre text based on a montage of monologues. Textuality and physicality accompany and complement each other. This is again in contrast to the often random textual utterances of BAK- truppen - often mediated trough physiologically altered voices - through for example the use of nitrous oxide, or electronic distortion or live mixes - crossing languages, improvised and responding to the conditions of the temporary zones of performance that they have established.

TRAM TRACKS II

I am sitting at table in the Neues Berliner Kunstverein - a gallery in Berlin. Later in the evening the table will become the site of a small performance that I will make for an audience of perhaps 80 people. I watch the interplay of indifference that takes place at the window. The framed, lit presence of Ulrich Lepka absorbed in his tireless, obsessive observation of the water droplets that fall into a iron dish partly filled with sand from a metal tap placed above the table at which he sits, the precise and graded markings he makes on the paper on the table in front of him. The indifference of the passers-by on the rainy pavement outside the window turning to glance at the figure at the table, the trams that rattle past, faces lit inside by the yellowish glare. A young man passing on the pavement stops to watch. He stands for a while, drawn into the slow rhythms of the work, then raising his hand, he slides open the window and steps trough the gap. The sounds and movements of the street rush in.

References

Allsop, R.& deLahunta, S.(eds) (1996) *The Connected Body?* Amsterdam:AHK
Arntzen, Knut-Ove (1990) "A Visual Kind of Dramaturgy..." in *Small is Beautiful*, (ed.) C. Schumacher, Glasgow:TSP
Baudrillard, Jean (1994) "Transaesthetic" in *The Transparency of Evil*, London: Verso
Goulish, Matthew (1997) "Five Microlectures" in *Performance Research*, Vol.1, no.3 "On Illusion"
Jager, Edgar (1997) "Ambient Theatre@temporary:/for the nineties/" in *Datum*, Amsterdam:NTI
Jones, Amelia (1998) *Body Art: Performing the Subject*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press
Valentitni, Valentina (1998) "The Post-Dramaturgy of Heiner Müller", unpublished article
Valentini, Valentina (1997) "The *Oresteia* of the Societas Raffaello Sanzio" in *Performance Research*, Vol.2, no.3, "On Refuge"
Walsh, Jeremy (1997) "The Media-(ted) Landscape: Image becoming Context" in *kitsch*, no.14 "Screens".

(2000)

'The Location and Dislocation of Theatre'

The Location and Dislocation of Theatre

Ric Allsopp

Representation reproduces the Other as the Same. Performance, insofar as it can be defined as represen-
tation without reproduction, can be seen as a model for another representational economy, one in which the
reproduction of the Other as the Same, is not assured.

(Phelan 1993: 3; quoted in Rogoff 1998: 130)

FRAMES

In what follows I argue that it is necessary to look at
and to reposition theatre not simply within its con-
ventional framings but increasingly in terms of the
contexts and locations in which it takes place. This
suggests an expanded idea of how theatre as both
process and representation operates within its con-
ventional boundaries (fixed space, closure,
coherence, visuality) and beyond them. It also
refers to an expanded idea of 'theatre' as a hybrid
form of performance that includes strategies
informed by dance, installation work, time-based
work, site-specific work and so on. It implies that
the 'ethical' dimension of theatre is not entirely
'contained' in its representations (as is suggested by
conventional views of theatre) but lies within its
processes and contexts. Theatre in this sense is not
simply located as a representational system, but as a
cultural catalyst. Whilst theatre will of course
maintain its traditions and forms, it has also to be
seen as a fluid, interventionist medium. It is this
shift in rethinking the possibilities of theatre that
might loosen attitudes towards the place and
importance of theatre that operates on the margins
and peripheries of the cultural mainstream; theatre
that confronts and interacts with localized rather
than international, cultural and aesthetic agendas.

The question of 'how' theatre is 'looked at' or
seen, rather than the question of 'what' is seen – the
'what' that is selected or framed by producing
networks and agencies – is a question usually left
out, erased by the assumption that 'how' theatre and
performance are seen is in the end 'up to the
spectator'. It is a consideration that remains
invisible, at least until such a moment when the
theatre itself breaks through the barriers of assump-
tion and unspoken convention. It is perhaps inter-
esting to consider the question of 'how' theatre is
seen in the light of Foucault's definition of power: 'a
net of relationships that weave through the entire
social fabric like invisible mechanisms which disci-
pline and regulate the consciousness and the body
of the individual by submitting them to a set of
"truths" and norms' (Petersen 1997: 31). It is these
power structures, these often invisible mechanisms,
that constitute the 'truths' and 'norms' that
constrain what theatre is or can be. It is the frames
and conventions that are *not* questioned, the ways in
which theatre is located and understood within sets
of assumptions of what should constitute its bound-
aries, that are the focus of this paper.

In November 1998 I was invited to present a
paper for the 'Iconoclastic Theatre Symposium' at
Chapter Arts in Cardiff, Wales. 'Iconoclasm' – the

breaking of assumptions and conventions –
suggests that the question of 'how' we see theatre
(in this case the work of Baktruppen, Societas
Raffaello Sanzio, and Goat Island) is in itself
central to the work. We cannot separate how the
performance constructs itself from the context
within which it is located, or from the networks
that allow its production. In Cardiff I spoke about
'the immobility' of the theatre image, and the diffi-
culty of 'breaking' a cultural frame that is already
fractured, and dislocated (see Allsopp 1999: 84–93).

So far, then, there are two dynamics: on the one
hand, the tacit acceptance of a conventional frame;
the relative invisibility of the question 'how do we
look?'; and on the other, the difficulty and
challenge of looking, when art and its conventional
cultural frames are dislocated and fractured. This
implies the possibility of a continuing shift from
'looking' or 'viewing' to 'participating'. How do we
participate in acts of theatre that locate themselves
in the public sphere without reducing or normaliz-
ing those acts to familiar and thus culturally undis-
turbing frames?

🔲 *I am sitting at a table in the cafe of the newly
completed Tanzhaus in Düsseldorf. It is raining. I am
sitting parallel to the large glass front wall of the
building which looks out onto a courtyard bounded by
iron gates and railings. The Tanzhaus occupies what
used to be the central tram depot in Düsseldorf. The
tram tracks, which enter the courtyard through the
gates and fan out into single tracks each with its own
separate entrance to the depot, now disappear under the
floor of the new art space, stopped in their tracks. The
friend with whom I sit remarks that it is only ever one
or two ideas that really alter things for the individual,
that open up new landscapes; the rest disappear
without trace. Outside in the rain men and women wait
surrounded by bags of cheap consumer goods for the
coaches that will take them back through the slow
hours and days to the east, to the margins and periph-
eries of Europe.*

The tram tracks (once at the heart of the public
transport system in Düsseldorf) which are now

'disappeared' under the floor of the new art space
invoke (for me at least) an image of the cultural and
conceptual 'institutionalization' of art and the
ability of a culture to absorb and therefore effec-
tively erase the artwork's ability to act as a cultural,
social or political catalyst. The disappearing tracks
also invoke an image of rupture or dislocation
between the 'work' of art as a cultural practice and
the economy and context within which it chooses to
locate itself. Its very dislocation marginalizes it in
relation to the necessities of those people who wait
outside in the rain. It also raises the question of
what constitutes 'centre' and 'periphery' and the
location of theatre or art within that question.

As Jean Baudrillard has pointed out, art has
already disappeared as a symbolic pact: 'the
capacity of art to negate reality, to set up an "other
scene" in opposition to reality where things obey a
higher set of rules, is gone' (Baudrillard 1994: 14).
There is now only the possibility of setting up
temporary zones of consensus – at least, that is,
outside of mass media – as Edgar Jager has
suggested. If the project of art is to take up the
fragmented world and find its living connections
not in an attempt to reconstruct ideological
monuments – the art object or performance as
'symbolic pact' – then it does so by creating a
temporary zone of coherence. Such meeting places
or temporary zones are essentially localized,
sometimes manifesting within the boundaries of the
institutionalized art world, sometimes elsewhere. In
this sense a marginal theatre exists.

This marginal theatre, which partially inherits
the aesthetic traditions of experimental theatre, is
not predicated on a historicist view of theatre, nor
on a regional or geographical view of peripheries or
margins, but on difference – the presence of
different voices and visions – as much within the
centre as on the peripheries. It is predicated on
questions that have had no precedent within the
discipline, on cultural, political and technological
perceptions that shift the discussion away from the
conventions of the discipline, and locate it in ideas
of slippage, of defocusing, of distribution, of refusal
or resistance; on a more profound shift of values

and attitudes towards visuality, textuality, identity and embodiment – in short on the recognition of difference at all levels.

Heiner Müller noted that 'theatre has to find its zero degree again and again'. If 'theatre' no longer holds as a means of adequately describing or categorizing the type of performance work that is proposed by Jan Fabre, BAK-truppen, Rafaello Sanzio, Desperate Optimists and others, it is because 'theatre' as a conventionalized means of seeing is no longer adequate to the conditions of contemporary culture or to the aesthetic explorations that these marginal theatres undertake. This marginal theatre proposes an unresolvable dramaturgy where the conventional terms – visual, textual, somatic, perceptual, spatial – are not replaced by a set of equivalent terms, but by a reduced and contingent sense of ambience, oscillation, indeterminacy, ephemerality.

On the one hand 'theatre' is shored up by the hollowness of its own conventions, shutting out the world, creating an 'other scene' that ghosts the real, remembrance, repetition, interpretation, no longer a vision of possible worlds for use; on the other hand 'theatre' opens up a landscape, a vision of possible worlds, a zone of temporary coherence. Heiner Müller felt that 'theatre [was] necessary when history is stalled, because it foresees that which is missing; and that which should be aimed towards; whereas revolution has no more need of theatre'.

■ *I am sitting at a table in the Neues Berliner Kunstverein – a gallery in Berlin. Later in the evening the table will become the site of a small performance that I will make for an audience of perhaps 80 people. I watch the interplay of indifference that takes place at the window. The framed, lit presence of Ulrich Lepka absorbed in his tireless, obsessive observation of the water droplets that fall into an iron dish partly filled with sand from a metal tap placed above the table at which he sits, the precise and graded markings he makes on the paper on the table in front of him. The indifference of the passers-by on the rainy pavement outside the window turning to glance at the figure at*

the table, the trams that rattle past, faces lit inside by the yellowish glare. A young man passing on the pavement stops to watch. He stands for a while, drawn into the slow rhythms of the work, then raising his hand, he slides open the window and steps through the gap. The sounds and movements of the street rush in.

Earlier we watched Boris Nieslony dressed in a grey suit standing in the gap between a pillar and a wall. A string holding two clothes-pegs crosses the gap just above his head. In front of him and to his left, some sheets of glass lean in a stack against the wall. He stands impassively for a while, then turning to a table behind him, he picks a photograph from a box and hangs it from the string in front of his face. The photograph that now replaces his face and head is the first in a sequence of life-size black and white forensic photographs taken in the early part of the century which show the sometimes mutilated and disfigured faces of victims of violence and disease – men, women, children. In an extraordinarily disturbing and transgressive sequence of variations, the suited male figure behind the 'face' animates the persona that appears with hand gestures, or with small objects produced from the pockets of his suit. We witness through the performance an array of our own emotional responses which at every moment attempt to deny themselves, which deeply challenge our cultural assumptions, and open up the 'invisible mechanisms' of truths and norms like a raw wound. After each action the photograph is torn away from the string and flung on the floor. The suited man leans over and takes a sheet of glass. He takes a pen from his pocket, writes on the glass, then places the glass against the pillar to his right. After the last photograph has been flung on the floor, the suited man picks up the stack of glass and lifting it in front of his face, smashes it with his forehead. He turns and leaves the space. The silence in the gallery extends out into the street. Nobody moves. Nothing passes outside.

This moment of speechlessness, of trauma ('the suspension of language, the blocking of meaning' as Barthes puts it) becomes a moment of 'first contact' – a transcultural space witnessed and opened up between the performance, the spectator and their

shared environment; a space of humour and violence; a space that relocates performance not *in* context but *as* context.

ECOLOGY

In his discussions of the simultaneous proliferation and disappearance of art, Jean Baudrillard compares art to a currency which may no longer be exchanged: 'it can only float, its only reference itself, impossible to convert into real value or wealth' (Baudrillard 1994: 15). He contrasts the apparent dematerialization of art (as something of worth) with the materialization of aesthetics under an operational form. The idea of an ecology of performance is in many ways subject to such a view. Placing ecology in relation to performance does not in my terms seek to rediscover some essentialist view of the place of art in culture or some view of a holistic connectivity between art and nature where the terms 'art' and 'nature' have some value beyond and above the complex interdependencies that make up the worlds we experience.

To come to a definition: I understand 'ecology' as a set of interdependencies between conceptual, social and environmental factors; and I understand 'performance' (as a time-based art) as an unstable element or catalyst operating within an inclusive ecology which enables people to rethink or revision or remediate their relationships to each other and to the interdependent worlds that are constituted by these relations. The term 'inclusive ecology' is based on how the relationships between the elements that constitute an environment are 'in play', as opposed to a 'selective' ecology based on ideas of equilibrium/balance/sustainability.

In his recent book *Performance: A Critical Introduction* Marvin Carlson speaks of the popularity of performance as a metaphor or analytical tool. The definition I have just given – performance as an unstable dynamic – refers to the act of performance, the performance object itself as a praxis (a complex of thought and action). Carlson observes that there has been a 'major shift' from the 'what' of culture, to the 'how' of culture which considers:

... how this material is created, valorised, and changed, to how it lives and operates within the culture, by its actions. Its real meaning is now sought in its praxis, its performance. . . . [This] make[s] it an operation of particular interest at a time of widespread interest in cultural negotiations – how human patterns of activity are reinforced or changed within a culture and how they are adjusted when various different cultures interact.

(Carlson 1997: 195)

In other words and in my terms an ecology of performance. Such a praxis moves out of traditional or conventional sites and relationships and sets up temporary sites of exchange and interaction, not only as sources of information, but as sites of formation and transformation – finding ways to alter habitual forms, to expose and question our place in the world, the place of art and performance as aesthetic strategy or as social action. These temporary sites of exchange recognize the 'ecology' of process without the closures often associated with conventional art. This is not just art referencing itself but emphasizing the contexts of artwork, and not just its commodity value as object (whether performance object sculptural object/textual object).

The sculptor Robert Morris has written 'Here is the issue stated so long ago by Duchamp: art making has to be based on terms *other* than those of the arbitrary, formalistic, tasteful arrangement of static forms'. This was a plea to let the world in on terms *other* than 'image depiction'. We are of course struggling within a material culture where a continual proliferation of 'image depiction' has become the norm. Art increasingly (and predictably in its definition as an unstable catalyst or dynamic) seeks refuge in sites and strategies that resist 'image depiction', concerning itself increasingly with its 'ecology' in the sense of its interdependencies as a cultural practice. In the light of ecological thinking (the recognition of contextual dependency) performance can no longer be thought of as separate from the environments within which it takes place. There can be no more 'empty space', whether black box or white cube, as a neutral, uncontested, transparent, acultural construct.

Theatre is always a complex interaction and negotiation between contexts, between centres and peripheries, between localized and globalized cultures. What for instance is included in or excluded from the cultural agendas operating in the centres – for instance ideas of ecology, of community, of social effect. What for instance are the aesthetic implications of a multicultural context? The curator Maria Lind points to cultural hybridity in the form of 'an arts practice where local experiences and global outlooks can co-exist and interact, often with a local bias' (Lind 1998: 235). As Gerardo Mosquera has indicated:

> . . . art was minimized as social communication in a world of mass media and advertising, to maximise itself as object, having a fetishistic value, translated into economic value. In contradiction with the times, it empha-sizes the artifact [. . .] to the detriment of the dissemina-tion of the message. But, the value of such artifact is not intrinsic to its materiality, it is created within a field of relationships.
>
> (Mosquera 1995: 134)

■ *It is a warm July evening. I am standing in the cool air of an abandoned church, a church which has lost the community which gave meaning to its function, on land that was once the polder village of Oosterweel outside Antwerp. The land is now part of an oil refinery owned by Petrofina. The church is being used as a focal point and café for a festival of site-specific work organized by De Beweeging. There is a bar, some tables and chairs, the usual literature, a stack of beer crates where the altar used to stand, people sitting, talking, drinking wine. Jason Bowman, one of the several artists making performance work for the festival, beckons to me. I follow him through an archway into what may have been a vestry and climb up a curving narrow stone stairway into the tower of the church. At the top of the stairs I can see a pale blue light glowing through an archway. The source of the blue light that suffuses the space is above me as I step through the archway into a small square room in the belfry, once occupied by bell-ringers, now crumbling brick walls, the timber of the uneven floor long since stripped away. I turn to see a small blue neon sign, a cursive sequence of numbers*

21175 slightly flickering against the dull red brick. The space is quiet and focused. After some time we both climb down the stairs and move back into the nave of the church, the murmur of voices, the sound of glasses.

In this complex work time becomes light. The object refers to its own ephemeral status as 'performance', as artwork. The work opens up the participatory space of the spectator, opens up the many relationships between the site, its environ-ment, its history, its present use, and the people (both living and dead) who participate in it. It proposes a basic question: what is the status and location of the artwork – of 'theatre'? How is it embedded in the specifics of a context, of a process? The blue neon 'text' refers to the number of regular church candles which would be required to illuminate the church for the number of years it has already stood and to witness this period of time being burnt. It is a fragile object made by human breath which constructs the formation of history and time. The same human breath which is capable of extinguishing 21175 church candles. For Jason Bowman the work is a function in/of the site. The site is a point where a series of cultural, political and social changes occur which traverse space and time. The process is as important as the product – the moment that the spectator sees the fragile blue neon is only a part of the total process. The spectator is a witness of a relationship with material culture. The work (in its totality, not just at its moment of becoming 'art object') functions as a way to pass these relationships on to the spectator, who can witness a net of relationships, but be included in it too. The process of developing a relationship is part of the artwork. What is the artwork? The spectator has become it. There are multiple publics, not just the public that sees the work in its material form (Jonker 1998).

Theatre is no longer the focus of innovation or radical opposition that it was perhaps twenty years ago (Raymond Williams was already signalling the demise of the dramatic – or at least its displacement – in the 1970s in 'Drama in a Dramatised Society'). Marianne van Kerkhoven noted in her editorial for

the first issue of *Theaterschrift* (1992: 28) that 'the power of dreaming seems to be the only power which modern art has at its disposal' given the powerlessness, the marginality and the small scale of audiences which are a fact of the performing arts. The 'crisis' of the theatre as a means of representation during the 1970–80s was brought about by a wide variety of factors: economic, aesthetic, technological, ideological. The questions of whose theatre, and theatre for whom (with their attendant notions of space, time, ownership, viewpoint, etc.) seem to be particularly efficacious in problematizing and undermining views of theatre as a fixed and unchanging form. Problems of authority, of hierarchy, of authorship and the discourses around these ideas also put paid to the possibility that theatre could remain a central means of cultural representation – if indeed it has been one at all in the second half of the twentieth century.

We see an increasing localization of agendas and aesthetic choices. In 1992 Anatoly Vassiliev stated his position vis-à-vis theatre as follows:

> During the past few years the process is such that I stopped examining life outside the theatre. I have been concentrating on studying only life in the theatre, life in the artworld. That means I have only been interested in a particular part of life as a whole, as it surrounds the theatre: the life of thoughts and ideas. Not life itself but the state of the ideas in this life. That is a radical change. As a consequence, I locked the doors of my theatre. And the more you close the theatre doors, the more it reminds you of a monastery. Otherwise we couldn't possibly explore either social ideas, or philosophy or the state of the art.

(Vassiliev 1992: 49)

I no longer believe (if I ever did) that such monasticism (the equivalent of Eugenio Barba's 1970s notion of a self-sustaining 'theatre culture') can have much impact outside a localized culture – a culture which is localized not simply in geographic terms but localized within a particular art network. The question arises of what a localized idea of theatre, of performance can do. In some senses our issue of *Performance Research* 'On Refuge' took up a

theme (Allsopp et al. 1997) that opens the question of what are the conditions of work – what kind of refuge is required to produce work, what sense of 'locality' provides the conditions for performance. Vassiliev continues to represent a strand of 'laboratory' (monastic) work in a time when the ordering and cultural identity of such models is widely challenged as elitist, introspective and out of touch. It is not to challenge the theatre that he produces using such a strategy – since the relation between process and product is complex and is never simply a causal one in terms of the impact of the artwork itself. Yet, as always, the direction or, better, the diffusion of artwork, of theatre/performance, is in the best sense unpredictable, in a Cageian sense unimpeded.

The idea of 'ambient theatre' as proposed by Edgar Jager in *Datum* (1997) provides a very different model where the attempt to find a place to live, a place to present the 'human body' in artificial surroundings, a redefining of values, results not in a reclusiveness, but in an ambient theatre idea of creating shelters or temporary zones in which people can meet. This is not the shutting out of the world, the closing of the doors to provide the conditions for artwork, but an opening up to the world, a world seen as ephemeral – a constant redefinition of what is at stake, the understanding of a fluid language of theatre, a nomadic view where a temporary zone, a temporary shelter, can be constructed outside the bastions of the institutions, an aesthetics of the marginal, of the *barrio*.

■ *I run to get my camera. I have to ask the guard to let me into the room where I have left my case and the material for my performance. It is still quite early in the evening, but darkness falls promptly in the tropics – no temperate seasons here. The single lightbulb, powered – as are all the houses here – by tapping into the wiring of a streetlight or any other convenient cable, which lights up the inside of Señor Hernandez's one-room house, is now hanging outside the front door, illuminating the front step and the path of gold leaf the width of the doorstep that runs from just inside the threshold out into the street. I have been*

taking photos of the work on and off since about
4 o'clock and have already finished up my film. Señor
Hernandez is insisting on one (one more) final photo-
graph of himself with British artist Sally Tallant
standing framed in the door, an image of the Sacred
Heart just visible on the back wall. They stand
together behind the lightbulb which hangs in the centre
of my viewfinder. This photo would never work, even
if I had a film. The two hens in their cage on the front
step are being fattened for Christmas. They were
brought out specially earlier and placed on the
whitewashed step. Señor Hernandez had finished
painting the front of his house and the step just before
the artwork was to commence at 4 o'clock. The
chickens are usually kept inside to stop them being
stolen, like all four wheels that used to support the shell
of a battered red Ford Mustang, now resting on
concrete blocks under the road bridge which shades
Señor Hernandez's house in the early part of the day.
Señor Hernandez is hoping to do up the Mustang, one
of these days.

Just after 4 o'clock Señor Hernandez, having
observed the beginnings of the work, had disappeared
inside his home and some while later reappeared in his
best suit. People dress down in Caracas, especially in
the barrios. Even though the barrio skirts Caño
Amarillo and the old art nouveau presidential palace
that lies close to Señor Hernandez's home, it is
advisable not to look as though you are a person of
property: a pair of good shoes, a watch, even a good
cotton shirt. Suits are for special occasions. I push the
shutter release. A satisfyingly audible click. No, there
was plenty of light. No, it didn't need a flash. It will
be fine. We are shaking hands. Señor Hernandez's
friends from around the corner have come over. They
want us to come and drink with them. We decline. We
are drinking with Señor Hernandez who has brought
us Polar beers. What is this? Is it gold? Is it real?
What's it for? Did you pay for this, Carlos? No, they
are artists from abroad. Artists? What does it mean?
It's gold – she came and asked if she could paint my
doorstep gold. I didn't think it would look as good as
this. I'm very happy, very happy. It looks great,
Carlos. We would like this too. How long will it stay?
A warm wind is blustering under the bridge. Flecks of

gold leaf lift off the step and the street. Perhaps it will
rain later. The bridge will provide some temporary
shelter. One of Señor Hernandez's friends arrives with
more beer. Is this art? It looks good – it looks good for
Christmas too. Let's go and dance. Yes, later – we
have to clear our things. It begins to rain . Señor
Hernandez stands in his doorway smiling.

• Photos: Ric Allsopp, 1992

TO CONCLUDE

I have tried to suggest a theatre of 'experiment' which opens up the aesthetic, cultural, political strategies that it can use and which locates a question at the centre of its work: firstly, a question of context – questioning the conditions of the work, the net of relations that are and have to be brought into play; and also a question of self-reference – questioning and pushing the boundaries of the work itself in aesthetic terms.

Finally, it is difficult to generalize about how theatre should be looked at. As I have suggested, it is dependent on the contexts and locations of the work itself. What is important is firstly the willingness of the spectator to engage their way of looking not simply within the conventional modes of theatre representation, within the theatre image, but with the broader dynamics that traverse the location of theatre; and secondly the ability of theatre (in all its levels and phases of production) to open up its own conventions, its means of thinking itself, to include both its processes and its representations within a fluid and transforming practice – setting up a temporary and appropriate shelter, rather than a fixed and unwieldy institution.

REFERENCES

Allsopp, Ric (1999) 'On Immobility', in *Disturbing (the) Image*, Frakcija, No. 15, Zagreb: CDU.

Allsopp, Ric, et al. (1997) 'On Refuge', *Performance Research* 2(3), London: Routledge.

Baudrillard, Jean (1994) 'Transaesthetics', in *The Transparency of Evil*, London: Verso.

Carlson, Marvin (1997) *Performance: a critical introduction*, London: Routledge.

Jager, Edgar (1997) 'Ambient Theatre/@Temporary/for the nineties', in *Datum*, Amsterdam: NTI.

Jonker, Thera (1998) 'Interview with Jason Bowman' (unpublished), Antwerpen: DeBeweeging.

Lind, Maria (1998) 'Stopping My Process', in *Stopping the Process?*, Helsinki: NIFCA.

Mosquera, Gerardo (1995) 'On Art, Politics and the Millennium in Latin America', in *Strategies For Survival Now*, ed. Christian Chambert, Lund: SACAP.

Petersen, Anna Ring (1997) 'The Authority of Invisible Power' in *siksi*, Copenhagen.

Phelan, Peggy (1993) *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, London: Routledge.

Rogoff, Irit (1998) 'How to Dress for an Exhibition' in *Stopping the Process?*, Helsinki: NIFCA.

Vassiliev, Anatoly (1992) 'Theatre as Monastic Community' in *Theaterschrift* No.2, Brussels: Kaaitheater.

Williams, Raymond (1975) *Drama in a Dramatized Society: an inaugural lecture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Allsopp

Section 2

Reviews

(1992)

'German Voices'

Hybrid, Vol.1, No.0

London: ACE. p.6

LEILICHES THEATER • RUACH • 17.9.92 • & • PETER BROTZMANN AND MIKE PEARSON • THE BOUND MAN • 1.10.12 • GERMAN VOICES SEASON • CHAPTER ARTS CENTRE, CARDIFF • Influenced by Butoh, *Ruach*'s intensity and emotional range articulated in direct physical terms the presence and closeness of mortality. *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* proposes a "double" or *Bardo* body, an exact duplicate of the human body from which it is separated in the process of death. Duplication and displacement were used extensively as choreographic and metaphoric vehicles. The stage separated into two emotionally intensified areas: a site for the preparation and commemoration of death - a miniature boat, flowers, displaced photographs - and a site of transition, a square of dust-fine sand that was slowly marked by the bodies of the dancers with the traces of mortality. The physical displacement of objects that sustain and shelter the living body - hair, clothing, bread, fire - heightened the continual ambiguity of relationships in the piece. These ambiguities were distilled in a beautifully controlled solo danced by Adriana Kocijan - speaking of memory, of sensuality, of the anguish of loss.

The Hebrew word *ruach* means breath, ecstasy, spirit. The presence of "breath" as an index of vitality, pervaded a collaboration between the German saxophonist Peter Brotzmann and Mike Pearson (Brith Gof) entitled *The Bound Man*.

It was unclear where the boundaries of the fictional were to be drawn in *The Bound Man*, its sheer physical intensity causing the imagery to collapse. Whilst Brotzmann's playing had an inescapable immediacy and power, Pearson's performance did not quite sustain the imagery he attempted to invoke. Perhaps this play with the engagement of the audience was intentional, an attempt to force us to experience the anguish of survival. So much of contemporary experience is mediated or vicarious, that it has become difficult to know how to react to such immediacy.

Here are two men whose bodies in different ways are *in extremis* - one found lying bound in an arid landscape of corroded metal; the other a moving source of incredible and sometimes brutal sound energy. The fragmentary narrative of *The Bound Man* unfolded through Brotzmann's playing, finding extraordinary transitions between the visceral and the lyrical (ripping sheets of multiphonic sound, rustling insects, melodic fragments), and through Mike Pearson's anguished physical struggle against humiliation and degradation. For all its shortcomings as a piece, the collaboration itself remains important for the rapport and virtuosity of the performers and as one of the rare opportunities to see an area of music-performance work which has an enthusiastic following on the continent.
by Ric Allsopp

(1994)

`A House with Wings?'

Notes, No.9 Nederlands Theater Institute

Amsterdam: NTI, pp. 20 -23

ISSN 0920 -2897

.

SCHOOL FOR NEW DANCE DEVELOPMENT
THE HOUSE OF THE SIXTIES TAKES WINGS

Amsterdam is one of the few European ci-
ties that have retained the marks and traces
of the Sixties as an indelible part of their
present character. The ambience of the
parks, the pervading sense of 'laissez-faire',
the liberal attitudes towards drugs, sex and
sexuality, the social provision are inconceiva-
ble without reference to the social and cultu-
ral 'revolutions' of the sixties. It is perhaps
not surprising that Amsterdam should have
provided both a spiritual and material home
for the School for New Dance Development
(SNDD) since the early seventies.

The SNDD, a faculty of the Theatre School of the Amster-
damse Hogeschool voor de Kunsten, grew out of a school
started by Dutch dancer/choreographer Pauline de Groot in
the late Sixties on her return to Holland from the United
States where she had studies with Martha Graham, Merce
Cunningham and Eric Hawkins. Her school introduced ideas
about dance, movement and body, reflecting a new aesthetics
that was shifting away from an emphasis on the individual,
coherent and extended body of traditional dance, to the col-
laborative, discontinuous and active body of new perform-
ance. The SNDD became a school working within such an
essentially post-modern collaborative aesthetics. The roots
can be traced to the Mountain College (North Carolina) in
the early 1950's and more directly to the Judson Dance
Theatre of the early 1960's with which the SNDD still main-
tains working links. Throughout its history it has remained
implicitly committed to an exploration of the live and moving
body as proposed by artists such as Steve Paxton, Deborah
Hay & Simone Forti, and more recently in the Body-Mind
Centering work of Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen; an exploration
which has effectively 'removed the body from the gaze by re-
turning it to activity, to the condition of always doing some-
thing' (Henry M. Sayre, The Object of Performance)

NON-SPECIALIST

In SNDD terms 'new dance' is a contemporary project of ex-
ploration and experimentation which has determined not to
work strictly within established aesthetic forms, but to use
and develop these forms in relationship to other means of

mind/body experience. New dance utilises specialist tech-
niques and alternative views of the body which draw on inter-
cultural and interdisciplinary information as a means of com-
munication and expression. It does not seek to diverse cul-
tural contexts.

Likewise the SNDD view of the dance artist and maker
places their work within a wide field of contexts and no
longer exclusively within the 'aesthetic' space of studio or
theatre. The 'artist' is seen as non-specialist in an increas-
ingly specialized world, with a role which is not prescribed -
that is not necessarily working towards existing 'dance'
markets - but responsive/responsible to contexts within
which the work is placed.

NETWORKING

Central to SNDD thinking in the last few years is the integra-
tion of the body/mind. The School's work 'draws on a his-
tory of continuing research into the perception and use of
the body/mind as a medium for action, design, communica-
tion, analysis and criticism in dance. This view on perform-
ance and dance has been developing over the course of this
century, as choreographers and dancers in Europe and Amer-
ica have initiated new movement languages and forms, as well
as contexts in which their performances have taken place,
confronting and breaking with established forms and atti-
tudes'. What is noticeable in this prospective statement is
the inclusion of 'context'. The exploration of integrated
body/mind, 'focused on an interaction with the origins of
movement and the development of an ability to give form to
ideas' has had a tendency, despite the underlying aesthetics
of collaboration, towards the selfreflective studio work,
often associated with new dance. The recognition of 'con-
text' - that is the recognition that the body/mind cannot
be separated form its particular context, and is (in part)
constructed by that context, has provided an interesting
dynamics within the school, and a dynamics which speaks
to the shifted and shifting contexts of the 1990's.
Performance making of necessity, includes contexts, histories
and location as an essential part of its considerations. Per-
formances originate in relation to other performances, other
practices; performances imply the inclusion or exclusion of
the 'other' - body, object, space, attitude; performances
'take place'. Performance and its making are complex - the
intersection of many differing types of information, intention
and action. Any means of providing a clearer integration of
'thinking and doing' is desirable. A 'network' approach for
example, selects one topic in a given area as a focus for study
and explores it from a number of associated perspectives. Ar-
eas share materials, techniques cross over - a network of in-
formation (practical, conceptual) that informs performance
making begins to emerge. As opposed to a 'traditional' linear
and progressive approach which tends to form reactive ideas
of performance (building in reaction to established forms) - a
network tends to foster an 'originary' approach; finding the
impulse for and necessities of, performances rather than re-
building on discarded aesthetic forms.

ꓷEQUATE MODEL

hat is it then that makes the small-scale, idiosyncratic and ꓲrginal institution (for example, Black Mountain College, ꓲrtington College, the SNDD) a place where ways of crea- e thinking and practice can grow and have an impact on ꓱ wider field of performance? It is often the unreconcilable ꓲsion between two positions, contexts or structures that ꓳvide the key to creativity. The continuing influence and in- ꓐational reputation of the SNDD as a 'laboratory' for the velopment of practice and thinking in new dance, may well ascribed to such tensions. Firstly, the tension between es- ꓲtialist views of the body and identity - the idea of the natu- , authentic, coherent, consistent and integrated body; and ꓱ constructionist view of the body and identity as a proc- ꓲ of constant refashioning, determined by contexts of gen- ꓐ, class, ethnicity, and ability. There is also an interesting ꓲsion between creative work and the institutional struc- es that surround and support it (or in some cases stifle

ꓲ reasons of scale the SNDD has been able to make very ꓳd use of the relationship between the inevitable vertical ꓳnagement structures required of institutions and the hori- ꓱtal structures implied by the dominant collaborative aes- ꓲtics of the school. This operates creatively in apparently ꓲndane, but vial areas. Food is literally at the centre of the ꓲool. It is great food and eaten by students and teachers ꓲe, and in various ways its preparation and distribution is ꓲtributed to by both students and teachers. The secretar-

iat take classes, attend performances, provide feed-back. The students clean the building, run the bar and so forth. The rec- ognition here is that different forms of operational structure, whilst necessary, facilitate creativity when they are regarded as flexible and accommodating and not as impositions. The Sixties dictum that the processes of life are equal to the proc- esses of art holds. This 'organic' approach to running an insti- tution (whose purpose is to finally enable specific and trans- ferable creativity) observes that the processes of art itself provide an adequate model that enables the institution to op- erate effectively. The imposition of economic and managerial models that regard arts education as simply another product to be managed, seldom achieves much in the facilitation of creativity.

IT PAYS OFF

The SNDD had its beginnings in a period that had begun to question the orthodoxies of unified psychological character and narrative in theatre. The dance world, and the field of 'fine art' performance, have of course, remained always on the edge of such concerns, but it is interesting to see how the marginal exploration of the moving body, improvisatory structures, problems of figure, persona and representation has become increasingly central to the broader concerns of performance in the 1980's-90's. The SNDD has effectively spent the last decade mapping and charting an 'invisible his- tory of the body' (Roy Porter, The History of the Body) - the history of flesh and blood, the territories of 'after language' (the exploration of aspects of bodily experience that defy de-

21

construction in terms of the 'scripted body') - often in an atmosphere of little interest, except from the specialist few and in ways that continue to be regarded by establishment institutions as at best idiosyncratic and at worst unacceptable. It is often the commitment to a vision, even if it makes no apparent or immediate sense in terms of conventional ideas of aesthetics or structures, that in the end pays off.

RE-INTEGRATION

Earlier this year (August 1994), in association with Writing Research Associates, the SNDD staged 'The Connected Body?' a series of five workshops and a conference, which brought together diverse disciplines (particularly 'fine art' performance and new dance performance) to explore the creative tensions that underlie essentialist and constructionist approaches to the body's representations in contemporary 'live art' and performance.

The project was sub-titled 'a site for re-integration'. This re-integration concerns itself with allowing opposing and often contradictory tensions to co-exist creatively. The SNDD building, which has been such an important part of its identity, provided a 'sanctuary' which both contained and gave freedom to a diverse range of performance, presentation and discussion. It aimed to respond to a continuing need for intelligent thought and practice concerning the body; and to respond to a detectable desire, particularly in some areas of arts practice and scholarship, for a move towards a 'new authenticity' that can accept notions of the body's essential experience and constitution as well as its fragmentary and constructed nature. In the planning of this project, it seemed that the SNDD would provide not only the appropriate type of flexible structure to work with, but also a literal site where creative and conceptual tensions could be explored.

An example of such re-integration came from an 'actuation' or demonstration that Ulsterbased performance artist Alastair Maclennan, made at the end of the five-day workshop period. With a clear reference to the didactic work of Joseph Beuys, he took a folding blackboard, laid it on the floor and, having cleaned it, proceeded to paint one half of it black. Once this was completed, he took four silver spoons, each containing a small piece of chalk surrounded by water and placed them at the four corners of the blackboard. Finally he placed two spoons each containing a piece of chalk surrounded by milk at each end of the central fold of the blackboard. This simple and highly allusive demonstration holds in a resonant performance image, the problems and solutions inherent in the re-integration of conflicting positions.

SEEDING

The Sixties are often represented as an arcadian experience, a nostalgic utopian dream, a time when it was indeed possible to 'get back to nature', to 'find one's self'. Like the heritage culture into which, it would seem, our more acceptable histories are absorbed and sanitised, the Sixties have become identified with those images that can be reproduced and mar-

Verlorengegangen. Choreography: Eva Schmale. Performed during The Connected Body? Photo: Uli Sigg

Solo performance by Ria Higler, during the workshop of *Marina Abramovic*, The Connected Body? Photo: Lot Siebe

keted for easy consumption. They have become one amongst a plethora of possible 'life-style choices' to be made in pursuit of cultural, individual and virtual identities. The Sixties of the 1990's are a simulation cut out of history, devoid of context and pasted onto the glowing, fluid surface of the present. 'All that is solid melts into air; all that is holy is profaned...' (Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, *The Rise of Bourgeois Rule*) and we are again forced to face the increasing undecidability of our social, cultural and aesthetic identities. What remains important about the Sixties as an conceptual, aesthetic and practical source for contemporary performance work, is a sense of the historical 'seeding' of ideas/images that occurred at that time and that begin to have an effect over much longer periods and in contexts that would have been difficult to imagine in the Sixties.

There are moments when any creative institution might be imagined as 'a house with wings' - as an image of both the 'art work' and the catalyst that brings the 'art work' into being (I am indebted to Cyrus Seif of the Theatre Faculty, Utrecht Hogeschool voor de Kunsten, for this image and an interesting difference of position.). This image can also embrace both essentialist and constructionist perspectives; in

other words it enables us to imagine art as transcendent, emanating from the other and speaking universal truths - a winged house that descends to us, that is brought to us - as well as the image of a house that is immanent and built out of a particular context, by a particular people, that becomes a collaborative vision and takes flights.
Ric Allsop

Ric Allsop is a founding partner of Writing Research Associates and a freelance writer, lecturer and performance maker. He has been a visiting teacher at the SNDD since 1991 and is at present a Research Fellow at Dartington College of Arts (UK).

23

(1994)

'The Zwillinge Project: Episode 7'

in

Zwillinge Project, ed. Kirsten Lavers

Cambridge: Object Books (1998), pp.33-34

1

More than anything else the day raised questions about the nature of the art work - not a question of art, but a question of what are the conditions and processes of art, the work of art: what is brought into view, what is drawn to the attention of the viewer, what materials are placed against or with each other, where are the borders, edges and closures of the work? The site itself - Prema Arts Centre, a former place of prayer - is significant as the focus of the work; an architectural space that literally provides a transforming focal point - the nine windows of the upstairs room framing the passage of light inside the room from dawn to dusk, a journey mapped by the artists every fifteen minutes onto the floor - a light and reflective room that also frames the nine half hour episodes of the piece.

The work draws our attention to what is or is becoming absent, to what is referred to - through the prayer, the votive offering, the wish-lists, the previous episodes of the Zwillinge collaboration, the drawings of the artist's model (which in itself indicates the complex set of references outwards, where no relationship is entirely as transparent and immediate as it seems at first sight). But it is not just the formal elements of the work that fascinate - the envelopes, the windows, the poses of the Life Model, the map of light, and so on that operate like the topoi or places of a complex memory-system (a system for who to remember what?) that holds in a spatial relation our hopes, fears, and expressions - but the informal aspects of the piece that fascinate as well.

The day is hot. Cream teas are being served on the lawns below the upstairs room, a quintessentially English expression which always seems (in memory) to accompany cultural events and links sport, landscape, art, and horticulture in an activity whose rules are reassuringly familiar. The signs of 'art' - the artist's model, (the artist as model - for where else is the artist in this work?) the easels and charcoal, the steady stream of drawings that emerge from the hands of the (other) artists who respond to the gradually shifting light in the room, to the subdued methodical actions of the Life Model and her Life Class Organiser - all point to the familiar: the work of art. But the familiar is not enough for some of those who drink tea on the lawns below, where murmurings of incomprehension, of not-knowing-what-to-say, or how to react, are too quickly lost in the warmth and balminess of a summer's afternoon. For how many really care to open up to the more complex and disturbing elements of what is occurring upstairs - the gradual trail that follows the fading light, the remains of the day, the traces of vision, the scored and recorded body of the Life-Model, the chest-freezers standing sentinel on either side of the inner stair, the envelopes that doubly ring the walls of the room above the nine windows, the wish-lists frozen in bags of water, the stones and broken panes of glass that litter the floor?

The wooden fire escape that leads upstairs has a text burnt into its steps: 'I have this awful habit of assuming that everyone is like me, and must like me have the same hopes, dreams and desires, but they are too afraid to admit to them'. The inscription is taken from a letter to the Zwillinge Project from Bill Stevens of Hull who for the last ten years has been keeping a list of all the things that he would like to achieve or experience during his lifetime. He keeps this list on top of his wardrobe and until this performance, nobody, not even his wife, knew about it ....

Ric Allsopp

(1997)

Archive Reviews:

'Montevideo / Timebased Arts, Amsterdam'

&

'Deutsches Tanzarchiv, Köln'

Archive Reviews

MonteVideo/Time Based Arts
Netherlands Institute for Media Art, Amsterdam

VIDEO ERGO SUM

Visitors to MonteVideo/Time Based Arts, located near the centre of Amsterdam at the top of Spuistraat, may notice a naked and unblinking eye on a video monitor which hangs in the office window to the right of the entrance. Observant visitors will also notice that the eye is observing them, following them and moving with them as they move past the window towards the entrance. The quality of interactive viewing that is implied and invoked in *I/Eye* (as Bill Spinhoven's (1993) video installation is called) becomes an index for looking at the work contained in the media art archives at MonteVideo. Housed with the Gallery René Coelho, MonteVideo has in the past few years become one of the most important archives of media art in Europe – to name but one aspect of its many activities.

Originally founded in 1978 by René Coelho as a gallery for video art and the promotion of video and television as media for artistic expression, MonteVideo merged with Time Based Arts (founded in 1983 as an initiative of the Dutch Association of Media Artists) and moved into its present building in early 1994. MonteVideo's activities, based on a philosophy of support for all aspects of media art, are divided

into three branches: production and post-production facilities enabling artists to produce work; distribution and presentation enabling artists to show and disseminate work; and research and development support for artists (since 1994) in the form of a 'visual arts laboratory'. The archive collections that MonteVideo now houses reflect both the results and the resources of this philosophy of support and, alongside MonteVideo's extensive in-house activities and collaborative touring exhibitions, provide an increasingly important active historical base for work in the field of media art.

By 1994 MonteVideo had already built up a substantial collection of work from leading video artists. The merger with Time Based Arts (TBA) brought a further collection of work and the collection as a whole is now broadly divided into a conservation archive and a distribution archive. The conservation archive supervised by MonteVideo includes media art collections from the Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, the Groninger Museum and Museum Boysmans-van Beuningen. The distribution archives are built up from the collections of the Lijnbaumcentrum, Rotterdam (1970–82), De Appel Foundation (1975–83), Time Based Arts (1983–93) and MonteVideo (1978 to the present). The former collections have been rounded off and the active MonteVideo/TBA collection is now growing by some twenty tapes per year. Not all the material in the

collections is yet available for presentation, but MonteVideo is currently making new screening copies of all the tape works in the collections. At the same time the conservation project is preserving material that was originally shot on old, and now no longer playable, formats and systems.

The Lijnbaancentrum Collection and De Appel Collection ('born on the eve of performance and body art, De Appel ... became the embodiment and international nerve centre of this new development within the fine arts') include important work by Abramovic and Ulay, Vito Acconci, Christian Boltanski, Chris Burden, Jim Dine, Valie Export, Nancy Holt, Dennis Oppenheim, Joan Jonas, Allan Kaprow, Alison Knowles, Gina Pane and Nigel Rolfe, to mention but a few. The Time Based Arts Collection comprises about 400 video tapes by international artists covering the period 1983–93. These include work by Abramovic/ Ulay, General Idea, Dan Graham, Nan Hoover, Ulricke Rosenbach, Lydia Schouten and Lawrence Weiner. The MonteVideo/TBA Collection includes some 800 tapes from Dutch and foreign artists covering the period from 1974 to the present. The catalogue notes that 'Typical of these works is their autonomous character ... the video tapes are the artists' end products. These are not tapes *on* art and artists' (Coelho *et al* 1996: 125) The collection includes

work by Peter Bogers, Livinus van der Bundt, Juan Downey, Gary Hill, Merel Mirage, Maarten Spanjaard, Fiona Tan, Steina and Woody Vasulka and Bill Viola. Apart from these collections, there is also an extensive selection of documentary tapes on artists, exhibitions and tapes from artists in the library.

The MonteVideo archive also houses about fifty artists' installations (which are also documented on tape). The work is primarily by Dutch artists and parts of the collection display a certain Netherlandish delight in sophisticated invention, the electronic and/or cybernetic equivalent of the 'cabinet of curiosities'; for example, Kees Aafjes's 1991 *Please, Close Tap after Use* where physical and simulated reality have been interlaced and

> for a moment or two, you find yourself experiencing the phenomen[on] of running water as if for the first time, and you turn the tap on and off a few times to see if what is happening really is true. Kees Aafjes designed a jokey little kitchen sink with a tap. When you turn on the tap ... water runs into the sink. But what you really see and hear, however, is a recording of running water: the bottom of the sink is a computer screen (virtual/simulated reality!).
> (MonteVideo 1996: 303)

Or, continuing the delight in 'living objects', Maarten Spanjaard's 1992 *Adelbrecht:*

> *Adelbrecht* is a ball, no more and no less than that. [However] Adelbrecht is a skilled [and] gifted ball: he is, in fact, able to act entirely independently. The ball Adelbrecht rolls about under his own steam, as it were; what's more, he speaks in the English of a Dutchman. Introducing himself with the words: 'Hi, I'm Adelbrecht'. . . . he has much more to impart. He also responds to touch, and if it is gentle he voices his pleasure, but

if you handle him roughly, he'll soon let you know he is not amused. A strange experience, a thing that comments on your behaviour ... an object with attitude! *Adelbrecht* is driven by a motor and is equipped with sensors and a small computer.
(MonteVideo 1996: 360)

Or more conventional video installations such as Steina Vasulka's *Pyroglyphs* 'built up from twelve monitors forming a circle on the floor. The room in which the circle stands is dark. The only light beams from the monitors, which present images and sounds from a forge. The images glow with fire and sparks' (1996: 377).

MonteVideo's special video publications include *The Collected Works of Marina Abramovic & Ulay* (in three volumes); a series of compilation Arttapes (1& 2) and three Chill-Out Classics by Gerald van der Kaap, with sound by Leo Anamact – videos with 'a mind of their own [which] are an invitation into the unknown world of the senses giving you access to the new techno transcendence'. MonteVideo has produced an excellent descriptive catalogue (Coelho *et al.* 1996) of the collections based on its database of artists and artists' work. It has also recently completed a comprehensive on-line relational database (called WatsOn) of the distribution collection which can be searched by genre, themes and keywords. The catalogue will soon be available as a CD-ROM which 'will contain not only sounds and images of the various works described in [the] catalogue' but also further information on the MonteVideo/TBA library, and artists' biographical data.

As its founder René Coelho hoped in 1978, the MonteVideo collection has indeed become a primary resource, which allows researchers,

artists and interested individuals a means of participating in a different kind of looking, of engaging with a history of media art works which do not easily fit within the norms of television culture.

Ric Allsopp

REFERENCE
Coelho, René *et al.* (eds) (1996) *MonteVideo/TBA Catalogue,* Amsterdam: NIMA.

INFORMATION
MonteVideo/TBA, Spuistraat 104 a 1012 VA Amsterdam, the Netherlands.
tel. 0031 20 623 7101 fax. 0031 20 624 4423
email. art@montevideo.xs4all.nl
website. http://www.dds.nl/ ~mvideo
The archive is open by appointment for viewings by individual researchers and small groups.

Deutsches Tanzarchiv Köln

MOVEO ERGO SUM
It would seem that 'collections' and archives are often built on the back of the insistent vision of a single-minded individual, and that whether they remain simply collections or become working archives is often also a matter of how that originating individual saw his or her reasons for starting to collect documentation and resources. In the case of the Deutsches Tanzarchiv Köln, the collection was seen from its postwar beginnings in 1948 (the original Deutsches Tanzarchiv in Berlin was burned to the ground as a result of an airstrike in 1943) as a resource for dancers equally as vital as the body itself. Kurt Peters, dancer, dance teacher and later

critic, whose energy and means built up the present collection, encouraged students to spend time outside their studio work reading and researching the histories and techniques of dance. Peters's interest in all forms of dance and movement from acrobatics to butoh, from ballet to contact improvisation, has resulted in a very wide-ranging collection of books, periodicals and newspaper cuttings, all methodically, if at times idiosyncratically, catalogued.

The library contains over 8,000 books and 85 current periodicals on all aspects of dance and movement. The collection's main focus is German expressionist dance from the 1920s and 1930s reflected in the one hundred or so estate collections and private papers of German dancers, choreographers and dance critics including those of Harald Kreutzberg, Dore Hoyer – the most important German soloist in modern dance from the 1930s to 1960s continuing the expressionist tradition established by Mary Wigman – and

Max Niehaus. The archive holds c. 80,000 photographs including work by Siegfried Enkelmann and Dietmar Dunhöft. In addition the databank includes information on the life and work of 250 German and international dance artists. The Tanzarchiv has published work on Valeska Gert, Dore Hoyer, Harald Kreutzberg and Kurt Jooss.

The Tanzarchiv was taken over in 1985 by the City of Cologne Savings Bank Cultural Foundation. It has developed into perhaps the most significant public dance archive in Europe, maintaining a highly visible programme of exhibitions, publications and video screenings. Since 1994 the Internet has enabled the archiv to make its collections available on-line through a well-designed website[1] and to make links with the New York Public Library dance collection amongst others. It also provides the medium for *Tanzwissenschaft*, a new electronic journal for German dance scholarship initiated by Frank-Manuel Peter in early 1996.

Archives and collections invariably have historical oddities as well as items of particular note. The masks from Mary Wigman's 1926 *Totentanz* lie casually next to a death-cast (by Fritz Cremer 1932) of the dancer Vera Skoronel's delicate hand in a small glass cabinet, as if waiting at any moment to be reanimated. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French and Italian dancing manuals as well as the voice 'contre-la-danse' of the puritan backlash are to be found with Oscar Schlemmer's handwritten notes for the *Triadic Ballet* first staged at the Stuttgart Landestheater in 1922. The tension between the ephemerality of dance and the possible artifacts and traces it might leave – and upon which it reconstructs itself – is noted by the present director, Frank-Manuel Peter:

All art forms are dependent on renewal. Each new development, every avant-garde, bases itself in some way on previous traditions and avant-gardes. Likewise each artist's practice depends on a detailed study of work that existed before it. The art of dance is no different in this respect; except that its transitory and fleeting character makes it perhaps the most difficult of all arts to document. An archive is a means of recollecting the art of dance, retaining the memory of dance.

This sense of the inseparability of the moment of dance and the histories that have shaped it is still manifest in the archive's obvious commitment to making the collection both active and accessible to a wide public, a policy that has now taken it out of its present overcrowded premises to a new specially designed building in Cologne's recently completed Media Park. The new building will enable the dance archive
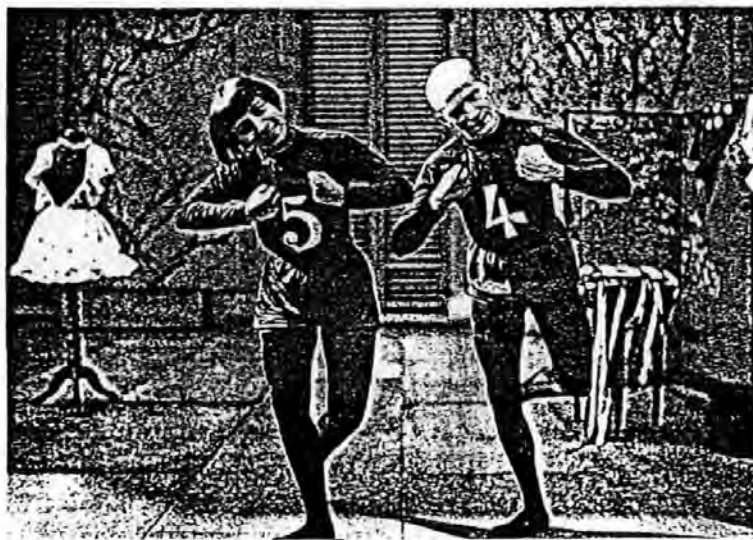
- Harald Kreutzberg and Yvonne Georgi in *Stravinsky Suite* 1929. Photo: Hans Robertson/DTK

- Palucca 1924. Photo: Charlotte Rudolph (1924)/DTK

to present its significant collection of engravings, paintings, sculptures, costumes, masks and stage designs for the first time in continuous exhibition; and will place it alongside the Mary Wigman Society, and the 'Public Presence Videothèque' – the Referat für Videotanz, the collection associated with culture and media, which is owed to the Cultural Foundation of the Cologne City Savings Bank, established in 1992 to support and disseminate the new art form of video dance. This unique collection in Germany of over 700 contributions emphasizes camera choreographics and camera reworks as well as documentation. The project sponsors camera reworks, initiates conferences, awards the first Video Dance Prize, and presents a quarterly dance film programme Tanzgeschichten at the Museum Ludwig in Cologne.

The Deutsches Tanzarchiv Köln is a tangible and accessible demonstration of how the links between practical and theoretical research that informed Kurt Peters's collection have benefited dance scholarship and have helped enable an active and dynamic dance culture around Cologne that is firmly linked to international development in dance.

Ric Allsopp

NOTE
1 The Tanzarchiv on-line is a part of the Stiftung Kultur Foundation website: http://www.sk-kultur.de

125

Archive Review

'The Archive as Event - Die Schwarze Lade'

Archive Review

THE ARCHIVE AS EVENT

The Black Kit/Die Schwarze Lade
ASA-European
Art Service Association, Köln

'A maximum of mental sources and information in exchange with a minimum of materialisation. A basic sense of new definition in perform-ance art and the first step in preparing a network as a physical and mental form.' So starts the infor-mation on 'The Black Kit' – an archive of ASA and its (former) parallel association Black Market International. Elsewhere in the litera-ture and documentation that surrounds the (net)work of ASA-European – the Art Service Associ-ation centred on Köln, inspired and given direction by performance artist Boris Nieslony – it states that ASA 'is not an art project'. Instead, it 'puts values into transfer' and in this way 'communication has a precise effect on all cultural activities, including art'.The place of a material archive in such a fluid and conceptual network is summarized by a further statement:

ASA is a communications pool into which energy, materials and information are constantly being fed. It is imposs-ible to receive anything directly from this pool, to draw anything out or to expect anything from it. Nonlinearly and non determinable by ASA, free floating forms materialise in unexpected places, for which ASA now sets the required framework. Within these boundaries free floating forms take shape. They consist of information, ideas and matter and they solidify into wares, projects or events and form meaningful relation-ships. Thereafter, these materializations disappear once more into the pool, 'ASA'. (ASA 1997)

The image of a fluid 'communi-cations' pool, which aptly character-izes the work that Boris Nieslony tirelessly continues to initiate, remains in some senses utopian. Such fluidity coagulates, gradually forming into the weights and measures of history – the archive becomes a material point of focus , of memory – and in this case literally becomes a growing but still movable 'kit' (see photo) where information and resources on a wide range of per-formance artists can become organized and catalogued. The material fact of the archive now becomes a focus for the 'development of a centre for studies, education and information' – always a precarious balance between the openness of arts action and fixities of the academy.

'Only art gives us the possibility to say something that we don't know' claimed the satirist Gabriel Laub. We also work with art as a medium of expression. But, since we have a particular tool at our disposal, we can say without being insolent: 'Art gives us the possibility to say something that we know'. And as this knowledge in its peculiarity compounds of several charitable components, we like to make this knowledge available to (for) anybody interested. The Black Kit is primarily an important tool for educational work, research and docu-mentation focussing on performance

The Black Box. Photo: B. Nieslony

art project art and artist-run spaces.
(ASA 1997)

The idea for The Black Kit origi-
nated in 1981 at a project in
Stuttgart for seventy invited artists
working in performance, perform-
ance art, installation, painting and
video, called The Council (Das
Konzil). The project, initiated by
Boris Nieslony, sought to extend
and develop areas of interactive com-
munication. The participants did not
wish to catalogue the proceedings of
The Council but proposed instead a
transportable container which could
be taken from event to event, from
meeting to meeting. The Black Kit
was envisaged as a generator of
thoughts, as an archive and as a
sculpture of public interest.

Exhibition spaces are turned into a
public library offering to anyone the
power of the ideas documented here. Not
just an invitation for the viewer to
consume, but an invitation for thoughtful
studies of letters, photos, poems, video-
tapes, objects, relics and records of open
work-situations. Moreover it includes the
opportunity for debate about the topics
and offerings experienced. (Jürgen
Raap, *Kunstforum* 95, 1988)

The Black Kit has been presented
several times within the framework
of exhibitions from 1988 onwards.
This means of presenting the
'archive as event' not only signifies
the literal display of selected parts of
the stock but also the active and
interactive realization of certain areas
of the archive and their implications.
The Black Kit contains documen-
tation since 1975 of the most
important international projects with
communicative structures related to
performance. There are documenta-
tions of artists' self-help organiz-

ations, artist-run spaces, conferences,
seminars and interactive projects.
Since 1981 the archive has collected
and structured documents of both
realized and unrealized projects. The
archive has become an organism, a
permanently growing account of
ideas. Including documentation in a
wide range of media, the archive is
structured with an index that
provides the possibility of searching
through thematic and conceptual
links and connections, keywords,
fields/ domains, and networks. At
present The Black Kit includes
documentation, dates and infor-
mation on more than one thousand
artists; over one hundred video-
documents of performance events in
Europe, Asia, and North America;
plus numerous slides, records and
audiotapes; more than five hundred
journals/ magazines, periodicals, cat-
alogues and brochures concerned
with the practice and theory of per-
formance art. The archive catalogue
is also available on-line.

ASA-European publishes an
annual performance reader *Slaps –
Banks – Plots*. At present there are
two readers based on ASA-initiated
performance conferences (1997 and
1998) which contain a wide range of
contemporary writings and state-
ments by artists. The readers are
available on disc direct from ASA (for
DM 20,-) and also on-line. The ASA
website itself has many interesting
links to ASA's network activities and
to other performance related archives.
The CH [Swiss] Performance
Netzwerk will host The Black Kit
with Boris Nieslony at Pfäffikon on
28–29 February 1999.

Ric Allsopp

INFORMATION:
ASA-European e.V.
Rathenauplatz 35

D-50674 Köln
email: asabank@dom.de
tel. 0049 (0) 221 245115
fax: 0049 (0) 221 240 4422
The most immediate means of
accessing events, information and
projects that comprise the ASA
networks is via the World Wide Web:
http://www.asa.de
Further information concerning
ASA-European and The Black Kit
archive is available via:
http://www.asa.de/ASA/
index.htm
Information on recent and forth-
coming events and projects is
available via:
http://www.asa.de/ASA/
NewsFrame.htm

(2000)

'Tempest(s)'

Tempest(s) at Terra Nova Theatre Institute

Tempest(s) was staged at the Terra Nova Theatre Institute in Copenhagen during April and May 1999. The production was created with and performed by Borderland, directed by Phillip Mackenzie, and co-ordinated by Antonio Cots Macia, with scenography by Luca Ruzza. This account is by Ric Allsopp, the production's dramaturg, with photographs by Jan Rüsz.

> Already a fictitious past has supplanted in men's memories that other past, of which we now know nothing certain – not even that it is false.[1]

One by one the audience is brought down a steep metal staircase into a large dimly lit industrial space. A man sits alone at a bare table in the centre of the space, facing the staircase, a pencil in front of him. On a wall behind him a large looped video projection shows documentary footage: a coastline thronged with people, an overcrowded ship departing. Individual figures separate themselves from the audience and approach the table. On a side wall another looped projection shows the identity papers and photographs of each figure. The man does not speak. A small gesture – a nod of the head, a movement of the pencil – either sends them through or back into the crowd. Those who pass through stand in line against the projection of the ship. For the displaced arrival and departure are one and the same.

Tempest(s) was staged in Copenhagen in the spring of 1999 as part of a five-year cultural and arts development plan initiated in Denmark in 1997 by Terra Nova Theatre Institute. The dramaturgy of *Tempest(s)* sought to examine relationships between the framework of an aesthetic model (Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and its themes of cultural meetings and confrontations); contemporary urban multicultural and intercultural social experience; and the placing of contemporary artwork as a cultural catalyst in such contexts. The social models of a monocultural society and the
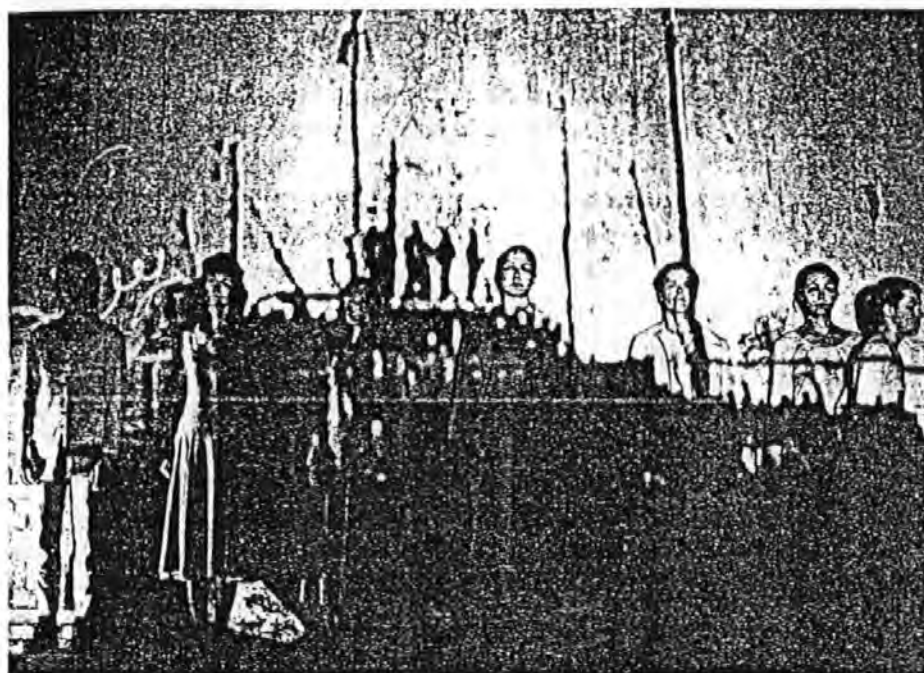
'Crossing the Border', from *Tempest(s)*, Terra Nova Theatre Institute/Borderland, Copenhagen, April 1999.

aesthetics of a traditional illusionist theatre or performance 'object' no longer easily reflect the cultural and social realities that typify contemporary urban experience. This is not to say that 'traditional' cultural expressions no longer have a place. Shakespeare's *The Tempest* opened issues of cultural confrontation and of illusion as a power structure within the world that Shakespeare was writing in at the end of the Renaissance. The dramaturgy of *Tempest(s)* sought to translate these issues into our own contemporary terms.

Seeking cultural analogues in the themes and imagery of Shakespeare's text, *Tempest(s)* imagines a contemporary Caliban, displaced from his now 'uninhabited', or recently decolonised island, negotiating the borders and cultures of 'Fortress Europe' – the former colonial 'heartland' or 'homeland'. In trying to find a place for himself within a world that is at once both alien and familiar, Caliban discovers that his attempts to negotiate identity and values on his own terms are still shaped by Prospero's 'art'. Prospero's means of maintaining power and control over his enemies, over Caliban and Ariel, and over his daughter Miranda, are imagined as projections – the 'virtual',

mediating and invisible power structures that pervade social and political life in Europe, that regulate its geographical and cultural borders. This virtual world of projections is contrasted with the actualities and pressures of a localised everyday world, in particular as seen through the experience of immigrants and refugees. Within this 'brave new world' Caliban rediscovers the difficulties of making a place for himself and the impossibility of a return in any sense to the island home from which he came.

The reality of the situation that *Tempest(s)* imagines does not only confront immigrants or refugees attempting to find security or asylum in contemporary Europe. Our individual perspectives on questions of gender, class, race, and sexuality are also contested areas of social and cultural negotiation. Our experiences of displacement, insecurity, mobility and difference are framed within increasingly globalized cultural images of security, prosperity, identity and idealized or normalized behaviours. It is this tension that sustains the displaced and displacing conditions of contemporary life, provides the ideas and relationships upon which the performance of *Tempest(s)* was built and gives the dramaturgy of *Tempest(s)* its central trope of 'displacement' in both the actual world of social and cultural experience, and in the aesthetic world of representation.

The dramaturgy links a reading of the *The Tempest* with contemporary ideas of 'otherness' as experienced by migrants, refugees, the homeless and immigrant communities; and also in terms of the everyday exclusions experienced by individuals in contemporary society – where we can go, how we can meet others and so on. The experience of potential displacement and exclusion is clearly intensified in certain locations and situations, such as national borders, immigration control, social security structures. In such situations physical spaces (the spaces of bureaucracy, the spaces of news-media, the negotiation of public space and private space) are intimately linked with language and the individual's abilities to negotiate languages of all types – from sign-systems to 'body-language' codes to language groups.

Displacement in terms of aesthetics can be read through the shifts and slippages of the conventional elements of a classical Aristotelian aesthetics. It is used structurally at all levels of the performance itself, affecting narrative lines, the use of text, of language, of characterizations, of objects and time, and of spatial sequencing. This affects aspects of how we see the artwork (visuality); how we read the artwork (textuality); how the elements (here in theatre terms) of character, object, space, time are used within the production. The performance imagery of *Tempest(s)* operates in both linear and non-linear terms, setting up both narrative and causal sequences, as well as non-linear, hypertextual parallels and linkages.

In *The Tempest* both Caliban and Miranda are displaced – the former through the effects of 'colonization', the latter through exile and separation. In *Tempest(s)* the characters of Caliban and Miranda are shown as a single shifting identity that may be recognized in each of us, and in the everyday social and cultural interactions we are involved with. The coherence and status of the dramatic character (at least in classical terms) is displaced with each performer as both Caliban and Miranda negotiating the projected images that are the illusions and power structures (happy families, ideal homes, social controls and legislation) of a disembodied Prospero, sometimes duplicating, sometimes subverting, always representing and merging with the 'live' presence of the performers. Ariel is the (sometimes reluctant, sometimes willing) agency of Prospero's authority and its idealizations in the form of the mechanics of projection.

The displacement of 'character' and personae as a strategy in *Tempest(s)* is paralleled in the use of text, both as speech (live, recorded, mixed) and as writing. The 'originary' fragments of text from *The Tempest* are either erased – literally written in chalk on the walls of the performance space and rubbed out – or projected unsubstantially as light; or removed from the mouths of

'Caliban's ground', from *Tempest(s)*. Terra Nova Theatre Institute/Borderland, Copenhagen, April 1999.

the performers and replaced on multiple channels available to the audience on walkabout headsets. Thus the text of *Tempest(s)* becomes multiphonic, 'full of noises', inviting its audience to make choices between what is seen and what is heard, to alter and transform meanings through selection, to construct a montage of live and projected performance image. The channels included a 1960s radio version of *The Tempest*; a female voice quietly whispering increasingly provocative aphorisms and commonplaces around cultural attitudes to 'otherness'; a series of interviews with people living and working in the locality of the performance space (the multi-ethnic immigrant area around Istedgade and Vesterbro in Copenhagen); a series of recorded 'live' phone conversations home from the performers to their families or extended families both in Denmark and abroad. In the rare instances where performers 'took pains to [. . .] speak' the texts they utter reflect the difficulties of language – mutual incomprehension, the use of invented languages or of 'minority' languages, the difficulties experienced by the immigrant placed outside a language, the place and status of 'native' languages. At the centre of all these displacements and tensions is the exchange between Caliban and Miranda (I.ii.350–64) with its cultural assumptions and sense of unresolved confrontation.

Memory and utopia form two additional themes within the dramaturgy of *Tempest(s)*. These are informed not only by *zeitgeist* – by the kinds of cultural reflection that the turn of the millennium sets going – but more specifically through intertextual readings of Shakespeare's text and *Tempest(s)*; and through exposure to particular contemporary artists – for instance Christian Boltanski, whose ideas of 'little memory' ('an emotional memory, an everyday knowledge') and 'small utopias' ('sweeping in front of your own door') seemed apposite for a project that is attempting to bring the local (the discourses of multi-culturalism and interculturalism in Denmark) and the global (discourse around power structures, immigration etc.) into relationship.

Tempest(s) was created with a group of people from very diverse ethnic, social and cultural backgrounds who, in proposing that the process and dynamics of theatre and performance parallels and interacts with the dynamics and operations of the contemporary world, recognized that theatre and performance do not simply reflect the world through establishing an 'other scene' or fictional world through which the relationships of the real world can be read.

Interculturalism implies the recognition of difference as a dynamic rather than as a category, an openness of discourse that moves beyond multi-culturalism. Theatre and performance are increasingly 'interdisciplines'

drawing from a diverse range of processes and influences. The terms of engagement with performance, with artworks, are also being redefined along lines of difference: social and political dynamics are reflected in aesthetic dynamics. Simply put, the dynamics and processes of intercultural relations are paralleled in the dynamics and processes of performance work. The assumption is that artworks and performances exist not only as self-contained or self-reflexive entities within social or cultural contexts (the singular vision of late modernism) but in a shifting and dynamic relation to cultural, social and political realities. This change of perspective affects cultural and aesthetic assumptions and moves towards interdisciplinary and intercultural forms that act against the grain of both aesthetic and social monocultures.

Tempest(s) is shadowed throughout by the text of The Tempest. To read back into and through the text of The Tempest is to open up the conditions within which Shakespeare was writing and to open up our own readings of those conditions and understanding of how we read. As a dramaturgical project Tempest(s) reads The Tempest outwards into the specifics and particularities of a contemporary urban situation, outwards into the transforming structures of performance, into the placing of a project in a particular situation, for a particular audience. At the end of Tempest(s) the audience leaves down a long narrow corridor – a corridor of memory – lined and dimly lit by nine black glass-topped plinths containing various texts or personal objects – for example a set of milk teeth, a blank sheet of paper and a pencil, a photograph of a railway line with a pair of compasses. On the wall beside each plinth is a photocopy of the identity papers and photos seen at the beginning of the performance. As in The Tempest there is no resolution here – only ambivalence and ambiguity. The return home is a return to somewhere that is no longer home – is itself displaced, is in turn idealized and mythicized, a place from which we once again must depart. The Tempest – like the Boatswain's ship appearing 'tight and yare and bravely rigged' – is always 'freshly beheld'. But as it travels so it transforms. John Berger has spoken of displacement as the impossibility of return for the migrant, for the refugee: 'Unchanging as the village is, he will never see it as he did before he left. He is seen differently and he sees differently'.[2] In so far as The Tempest travels, it can never return.

ON THE WORLD STAGE: TERRA NOVA

1 Jorge Luis Borges, 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius', in his Collected Fictions, trans. Andrew Hurley (New York, 1998), p. 81.
2 John Berger and Jean Mohr, A Seventh Man (Harmondsworth, 1975), p. 220.

Section 3

Editorials

(1996)

Introduction to 'The Connected Body?'

in

The Connected Body? ed. R.Allsopp & S.deLahunta

Amsterdam: AHK, pp.6 -10

Introduction

The universe unfolds in the body, which is its mirror and its creature. Our era is critical, it has destroyed the old image of the world and as yet has not created another. That is why we do not have a body ...
[Octavio Paz]

A fascination with the human body, its presence, location, status and identity continues to provide fuel for a debate surrounding the body that goes at least as far back as the fifth century B.C. when Heraclitus noted that 'we are estranged from that with which we are most familiar'. Octavio Paz's sense of the contemporary difficulties in identifying what is 'the body' and what is meant by 'the body' (whether we accept his analysis or not) indicates a persistent disjunction in our attempts to integrate the body as a coherent site of representation and presence. The forms that frame this gap are many and varied, and dependent on perspective and approach. Within the discourses that surround contemporary performance, this gap is partly located in an increasing separation between a 'theorized body' and an 'experienced body' where the theorized body–as represented, gendered, located, presented or absented–is privileged over the inherent experience of the body and its systems.

This double status of the body in performance has become fundamental to its articulation in both modernist and post-modern practice . The body participates as a focus of experiment: as an experiential site–as presence, a dynamic, moving, transforming and resistant body; and as a site of representation–as reference, as object, as a complex of meanings. This oscillation of status resists any surety or fixity which might reduce the body in performance to either mere representation or simple biological presence. The body in twentieth century performance becomes an ambivalent site which offers modalities of presence and reference, of physical activity and image. This ambivalence towards the body would seem to be a key dynamic in recent performance and performance theory.

The writer Lewis Hyde noted that 'a work of art is a gift, not a commodity'. There is an analogy to be made with this observation which concerns the marginalization of the body in western culture. However much the recent revival of interest in the

body has refocused our attentions, the body remains (as Roy Porter points out elsewhere in the book) an 'invisible' component of history, marginalized within a hierarchy of knowledge that privileges language and the mind. The body circulates within an economy that is predominantly concerned with its commodification. The exploration of the body as a means of resisting this economy, as a means of locating value on an individual and communal level became a central focus of the 1994 project 'The Connected Body?' of which this book is a partial document. As one of its participants observed:

... it was recognized that a major issue in the understanding of the body in performance is the tension between the ways in which we might experience the body as 'connected' [...] and the ways in which we might reflect upon and represent it as 'disconnected' [....]. This suggests an ontological and ideological tension between the body and the self. An individual might gain a sense of authenticity and connection with the self in and through the body during training, in particular through the varieties of holistic bodywork (BMC, yoga, etc.) explored during the practical sessions. However, many of the speakers during the conference proposed that this connection is profoundly disturbed by the discontinuous and unstable appropriations and ideological representations of the body throughout the history of western culture and within an increasingly mediatized and technologically driven world culture.
[Nigel Stewart in NTQ vol. XI no.42 (1995) p.191]

The body is always interrogative–always a question, an ambivalence about what is experienced in the body and how the body is represented and constructed in the social, cultural and physical worlds that it inhabits and participates in. Is the body 'connected' and if so to what? Is the body disconnected?–and if so how?

6

What impact on attitudes and strategies towards 'art making' as performance, as dance, as theater, are being made by contemporary critiques of the body, presence, representation, identity and subjectivity?

The impetus to draw together a number of influential artists and scholars in a gathering that would make possible an exploration of these questions, arose from a project held in 1993 by the Centre for Performance Research in Cardiff, UK on the points of contact between performance, shamanism and ritual. An ethnographic film 'Sucking Doctor' was screened as part of a presentation on shamanic practice by Professor Sam Gill of the University of Colorado. It documented a healing event in which a female Pomo Indian shaman 'cured' her husband in front of a gathering of witnesses. What we were struck by was not only the spatialization of the event, its blend of the everyday and the 'non-ordinary', the theatrical and the magical, but the manner in which the healing process was induced by a literal 'hands on' manipulation of the body, a method which paralleled the type of 'hands on' work that we had seen and/ or been involved with in our associations with bodywork and new dance, particularly through the School for New Dance Development (SNDO) in Amsterdam. The conscious integration of pretense and actuality, of presence and reference in the film provoked our concern with the question of the connected body.

The connected body? As if the body were an experience that could somehow be held in common–a return to some primary collective physical experience untroubled by representation, gender, identity, presence. But this is also part of the question–the insistence of the body as physical presence, the commonalties of physical experience, the sense of the body as something that is shared, that speaks to us in ways that are increasingly difficult to keep in touch with. Perhaps the title could more appropriately have been 'A Connected Body?'

The Connected Body? project that grew from these beginnings was held at the SNDO in Amsterdam between August 20–28, 1994 as a gathering of artists, scholars, educators and others whose work (seen as a field of exploration) embraced both the 'body's' inherent connectedness and its cultural construction. The project was designed to bring together participants in a forum where radically different approaches to the body could be represented through experiential, performative and discursive means, based on a common desire to seek connections and perspectives that would broaden understanding and practice in contemporary arts. The forum provided an opportunity to examine the effects of various contrasting discourses and practices on the 'body's' representations in contemporary 'live art' and performance. In organizing the project we sought to respond to the continuing need for intelligent thought and practice concerning the body; and a move towards a 'new authenticity' that accepts notions of the 'body's' essential experience and constitution as well as its fragmentary and constructed nature.

Our approach to 'The Connected Body?' was interdisciplinary, reflecting both the concerns of contemporary performance and an eclectic curiosity on our part with what other disciplines have to say . Performance draws both from the specific techniques of a discipline or certain other forms of performance, and from its continuous blending with other disciplines, modalities of thought and specific contexts. Performance cannot avoid being 'contaminated' or transformed by theoretical shifts and perceptions. It is never possible for us to discover an authenticity that is not mediated by cultural attitude, social convention, or political ideology. The body is perhaps our final point of resistance and seems to many who explore its systems, its geographies and its histories, to hold out the promise of an authenticity which will transcend

7

the limitations of its construction. Interdisciplinarity is not only a necessary exploration of the overlapping domains between disciplines, but also suggests that a new authenticity is always ambivalent, framed within given sets of constructs, a space that remains only 'in between'. Coming to conclusions, finding answers, creating endings or closures concerning the question of a connected body was never a part of our strategy.

We started to explore the gaps between fine art performance (as exemplified during the project and in various media by Marina Abramović, Valie Export, Linda Montano, Alastair MacLennan, Sally Tallant and others) and dance/ performance work and holistic bodywork, especially 'new dance' with its insistence on corporeal experience which shifts the emphasis away from the body as representation towards a phenomenological body (as exemplified during the project by Deborah Hay, Eva Schmale, Jacques van Eijden, Les Ballets C.de la B). These disciplines seemed to be drawing on attitudes, techniques and approaches to the body that, whilst often dia-metrically opposed, shared parallels, similarities and overlaps in their usage and representations of the body. In addition, we wished to provide other takes and fixes on this indeterminable body, and we sought practitioners and scholars from other disciplines whose work might shed light on the question of the body in performance: medical history, archaeology, art and dance history. A number of approaches to the body including virtual technologies, we rejected; not because we doubted their significance, but because we wished to keep the debate and practice aligned with the (increasingly problematic) idea of 'live work'–work for the body to do.

We hope that the present book both reflects and extends the 1994 project. It consists of statements and interviews from the artists involved who were asked to reconsider their relationship to the body in the light of their current work, or in response to the workshops and performances that they gave; likewise we asked the theorists and practitioners who presented conference papers to rework and extend

their ideas. These statements and papers provide the backbone of the book and are accompanied by reports, quotations, and commentaries from participants in the project as well as other materials and images. We have attempted to structure the body of the book so that it will reflect the particular spirit of 'The Connected Body?'–a sense of a creative collision of ideas, images, practices, attitudes and beliefs, and the construction of a temporary 'body politic' with its conflicts, contradictions, and confluences.

The work of the Belfast-based performance artist Alastair MacLennan who was invited as artist-in-residence, and the American performance artist Linda Montano who took up 'astral residence' for the duration of the event, deserves special mention because of a comparative 'invisibility' in the placing of their work. Their very different but related explorations of physical 'presence/ absence' provided an important touchstone for the project. The instructions for the Linda Montano Room begin the book, and the Room itself is 'visited' in Johannes Lothar Schröder's 'Letter to Linda Montano' in Part II. We have also attempted to place the new photo-textwork that Alastair MacLennan has provided for us throughout the body of the book as 'actuations for the page', paralleling the daily 'actuations' he made during the project.

The rest of our material–artist's statements, papers, commentaries and marginalia–has been grouped around the themes of the four panel discussions so ably focused by Claire MacDonald and Dorine Mignot that took place during the 1994 conference.

In Part I: The Body and Healing, following the description of the Linda Montano Room, we have a recent interview with Marina Abramović whose exploration of the thresholds of the physical and psychological in her internationally recognized performance and related artwork needs very little introduction. Marina Abramović discusses the 'transformation of the known into something unknown' in relation to her workshop 'Clean the House'; and a

8

new approach to risk for her which, while still involving the preparation of the body for a state of openness in which anything is possible, may be more 'playful'. Enzo Cozzi's account of his on-going fieldwork on healing and devotional dances amongst the *mestizo* populations and Aymara peoples of Chile touches on aspects of social and self-healing 'by negotiating conflict and building bridges, and searching for the harmonization of contraries.' This resonates with the ideas of conflict resolution that are at the heart of Alastair MacLennan's work and the 'work of integration' Fiona Sampson discusses in her poetic response to connections between body and mind. By contrast Professor Roy Porter's provocative paper on how the eighteenth century 'body politic' utilized medical representations of the human body for political purposes, resists the cultural hierarchies and prejudices which have resulted in the traditional 'disembodied histories' of western europe by asserting the 'powerful presence of the body' within them. We should add that Roy Porter's article as reproduced here has been reduced from a much longer script which he prepared for 'The Connected Body?' conference. His lecture was profusely illustrated and the full script relies on specific references to illustrations which we were unable to include in this book.

In **Part II: The Represented Body**, the Viennese art historian and curator Silvia Eiblmayr provides some detailed commentary on a sequence of images from the work of the Austrian media- and body-artist Valie Export. These images formed a part of her analytical presentation on Export's 'feminist actionism' in which Export's use of the live body as a 'material part of the structure of representation' was made explicit. The statements by Johannes Lothar Schröder, the British performance artist Sally Tallant and the American dancer and choreographer Deborah Hay provide an instance of approaches to the body as a site of representation that are seemingly irreconcilable, yet have interesting overlaps. Schröder's 'Letter to Linda Montano' explicitly makes

a transition across the apparent gap between Valie Export's work and the literal 'holism' reflected in Deborah Hay's statement 'What I call my mind is my whole body. What I call my body is fifty–three trillion cells'. Sally Tallant's provocative installation 'Scar' predicates itself on an interaction which implicates the audience, both literally and metaphorically, in the violation of the body. Finally, Ron Bunzl's 'Ah ha Nada!' describes the process of Deborah Hay's workshop 'Intrinsically Appropriate Dancing' which suggests a place beyond representation.

In **Part III: The Body as Process**, the German performer Eva Schmale provides a recent statement on her attitudes towards the body and articulates in committed terms the body as the site of perceptual awareness and understanding, a body that resists the reductionism of language and the alienating effect of mediatized images. Eva Schmale's work consistently attempts to shift the body from the 'invisible and disembodied' histories that marginalize it towards a recognition of its centrality and 'resistant potential'. In a different sense, Johannes Birringer in 'Reconstructions' sees the body operating on the periphery and places the body in the 'between' space of the 'border'. He argues that our bodies (whether individual, social or collective) are capable of being experienced because they are symbolic systems which participate in a political struggle over identity and legitimation and 'derive their authority from the symbolic which, politically speaking, is a mechanism of dominance'. The Dutch dancer and choreographer Pauline de Groot places the dancing body in everday circumstances outside the theater, where an awareness of 'the specific dimension of the moment' enacts a process of transformation within the daily routines of life. Robert Schwarz in his paper on 'Body, Space and Idea' develops a relationship between the body and language that sees the body as a process of spatialization that inscribes itself in language.

In the final section of the book– **Part IV: The Constructed Body**, both Mike Pearson and Claudia Jeschke develop extensive structuralist approaches

9

to the performative body that are complemented by the literal transcription of a Body-Mind Centering class by Jacques van Eijden and the reflections on the on-stage and off-stage body provided by Belgian choreographer Alain Platel (Les Ballets C. de la B.). In mirroring theater and archaeology, Mike Pearson draws on theater to 'suggest how the body (in the past) might engage with surface and volume, with object and backdrop in extremis and in repose', and on archaeology to suggest that 'the truly "connected body" must exist in time, deep time, as well as space'. Claudia Jeschke's paper 'Representing the Body' provides an illuminating typology of the phenomenological body in dance in relation to strategies of dramaturgy and choreography from the sixteenth century to the present. Like Roy Porter's paper, Claudia Jeschke's was extensively illustrated at 'The Connected Body?' conference, and we are only able to reproduce a representative selection of the slide images she used. Her closing remarks assert that a disjunction between the body as presence and the body as representation do not apply 'to a body used in a theatrical context' where

'the phenomenological body was never disconnected from the strategies of representation, i.e. of dramaturgy or choreography.'

The book we have compiled here from material relating to the 1994 'Connected Body?' project is an expression of the diverse and complex circumstances of the body in relation to performance. It contains extensive boundaries of space and time, and numerous borders of imagery and ideas. We encourage the reader to sample the special circumstances of each author and look for insights inherent in each approach to the body and performance. In reading this book, we hope the atmosphere of collision and overlap will provide a sense of the excitement generated by the original project, and support the notion of a new authenticity that embraces complementary and contradictory positions vis à vis the body as we move into a future where questions of the identity and experience of the body will be as pressing as ever.

Ric Allsopp & Scott deLahunta
Amsterdam 1996

10

(1996)

Editorial for 'On Illusion'

Editorial

The Polish theatre director Tadeusz Kantor ' after years of anti-illusionary work' stated that 'illusion shifts reality onto another track, the track of poetry' (Plesniarowicz 1994: 45). This track is earlier projected by Charles Olson in his discussion of an 'open field' poetics (Olson 1966: 16): 'the poet ... can go by no track other than the one the poem under hand declares, for itself.' I have always liked the ambiguity of this phrase 'the poem under hand declares' for its grasp of, the way it catches the meanings of 'under hand' as holding together images of control, craft and process with deception, artifice and risk. It is a phrase that aptly contains the mutual inseparability of illusion and the real within the project of performance; an image that echoes the various 'under hand' approaches to illusion that make up the conversation of this third issue of *Performance Research*. The conversations on illusion take two broad but not exclusive positions: illusion as magical trick or illusionist spectacle; and illusion as an approach to the problems of 'the real' and identity. As a whole they point towards radical uses of illusion as a means of framing performance work.

At the shrine of the Black Virgin of Guadalupe in Extrémadura you can ascend a broad stairway from behind the Chapel of the Virgin, that brings you to the '*camarín*', presided over in each corner by the waxen figures of Miriam, Judith, St Catherine and St Anne, almost lifelike in their flower-decked vitrines. The *camarín* forms an antechamber to the shrine of Our Lady of Silence. When enough visitors have climbed the stairway – pilgrims from the eastern bloc (it is 1987), local devotees, a man on his way home from work, cultural tourists – a monk appears from a small door concealed in the panelling and guides you into the shrine. Your attention is drawn to an enamelled panel between two openings that look down on to the nave of the chapel. It shows the miraculous episodes of the Black Virgin. The monk narrates each image in turn – the burial in

Guadalupe of the statue in 711 after defeat by the Saracens; the rediscovery of the statue by a cowherd named Gil in 1326; the visitation of popes and kings to the shrine. The air of expectancy grows more tangible. As the final episode is completed the monk discreetly presses a lever which spins the Black Virgin into vision, turned like a page of the book she so oddly resembles. The inspiration – the literal intake of breath at this small disclosure – affects us all. For some it is a revelation, the culmination of an arduous journey, the possibility of a divine intervention within the everyday (an illness cured, a marriage saved, a trespass forgiven); for others it is a brief moment of theatre, or of storytelling, of showmanship which might recall Herbert Blau's comment that the 'illusion [is] so exhausted by history that it can barely reproduce itself' (Blau 1992: 27).

By way of beginning, these conversations are framed by Nicholas Zurbrugg's review article of Jean Baudrillard's recently published book *The Perfect Crime* (1996: 20–4), which begins with the epigraph: 'Given the mass of evidence, there is no plausible hypothesis but reality. Given the mass of evidence to the contrary, there is no solution but illusion.' Baudrillard argues that it is the 'proliferation of reality' produced by simulation, that is 'our true catastrophe'; and that illusion, not the real, opposes simulation. Only therefore through restoring the potency of illusion can the exponential curve of the real be exceeded. The Chicago-based performance group Goat Island, resident in the UK during the spring and summer of this year, have collectively contributed an 'Illusiontext' both as a form of active documentation of the processes of creating their new performance (*How Dear to Me the Hour When Daylight Dies*, May 1996) and as a testimony to the uses of illusion in exceeding the real – 'this performance will hurt'.

The hierarchy of western metaphysics has prioritized the real over illusion. The effects of this on

notions of presence and absence within perform-
ance initiates Andrew Quick's discussion of the
differing tensions between 'the operation[s] of rep-
resentation, of repetition, of illusion' and the
ontology and presence of 'the real' itself in per-
formance. The now largely hidden work of the
seminal English theatre company Impact Theatre
(active 1976–86) is unearthed and reread through
the work of Derrida, Lacan and Žižek and their
deconstructions of 'the real'.

The performances of 'The Only Leon' – the
'most successful female impersonator in nine-
teenth-century blackface minstrelsy' – are reread
by Annemarie Bean, in her article 'Presenting the
Prima Donna', as constructing and securing,
through gender transgression, both the identity of
the dominant white male and black female
sexuality. Such uses of illusion to mediate social
desires through a 'performed cultural imaginary'
are then taken up from a psychological perspective
in Etzel Cardeña's 'Truthful Trickery:
Shamanism, Acting and Reality'. The analogies
between forms of shamanic performance and the
methods of the western acting tradition allow us to
question the usual distinctions between pretence
and reality, appearance and substance. Illusion
when used in particular performative ways can
have concrete and real effects on the subject, not
only therapeutically, but also as 'a jarring step'
from illusion to a reality beyond the circumstances
of the everyday.

Simon Herbert's interview with the Belfast per-
formance artist André Stitt, whose work since 1976
has explored the extremities of life and art,
describes this jarring step and the very real impli-
cations of the risk of illusion from the performer's
viewpoint. The implications of such an intensified
individual journey by the artist confront us with
the nature of social responsibility, the possibilities
of redemption and the edge between the illusion
and reality of performance. The question of art and
artifice – a debate resurrected by the impact and
insistence of new media technologies – is identified
by Baudrillard, in terms that evoke the work of
André Stitt:

> True artifice is the artifice of the body in the throes of
> passion, the artifice of the sign of seduction, the artifice of
> ambivalence in gesture.
>
> (1993: 51)

Baudrillard argues that artifice as 'the power of
illusion' is in no way concerned with what *generates*
reality, but with what *alters* reality. The distinction
is in trying to understand the uses of illusion rather
than the meanings of illusion. As Michael Mangan
points out in his article on Elizabethan uses of
juggling and conjuring, northern renaissance
culture displayed a nervousness of the 'juggler' and
'conjuror' – a nervousness that is still apparent.
Operating on the margins and periphery of culture
(which is the habitual place of performance) such
'jugglers and conjurors' enable us to experience an
altered reality – a reality that might hold the possi-
bility of a different future.

The staging of illusion is a problem that is taken
up in Lynn MacRitchie's articles on the work of the
British performance artist Rose English; in the per-
formance writings of Caroline Bergvall, and in Exe
Christoffersen's survey of a 'nomadic dramaturgy'
in the work of the Danish theatre company Hotel
Pro Forma.

Lynn MacRitchie guides us through the work of
Rose English and particularly 'her deconstruction of
the thaumaturgy – the wonderworking – of theatre'.
Her rigorous examination of the terms and subtle
distinctions that construct the conventions of
theatre, has typified her work since the mid-1970s.
English's interest in the ways in which theatre
stages and spatializes the illusionary is echoed in the
writings of Caroline Bergvall. The uses of illusion
and the vestiges of the real, the identity or displace-
ment of text with the spatiality of surface, are ideas
that Bergvall addresses 'for the page' in the docu-
mentation of her recent (May 1996) text installation
Eclat: Occupation des Lieux, 1–10. Here and in the
'live' performance of the text, the work keeps ironi-
cally pointing to the frequent ruptures between the
play of illusory spatiality in the text, and the reading
and consequent perception of the actual space of
performance. The *trompe-l'œil* as an imitation of

nature which conjures up a world woven through with features of the real, as Exe Christoffersen puts it in his survey of the work of the Danish theatre company Hotel Pro Forma, 'points to the fact that limits exist while at the same time being a fiction and a passage to another fiction'. Their work since 1986 has explored not only the formal aspects of illusion, but also the status of marginality and ambiguity in audience–performer relationships. Christoffersen also reads the work through a notion of a 'nomadic' dramaturgy: a 'restless' non-linear dramaturgy somewhere between movement and being, format and identity.

Theatre and performance are forms that play within the ephemeral, the disappearing; forms that occupy a ludic space held in tension by momentary shifts between presence and absence. Baudrillard has elsewhere referred to the disappearance of the 'soul of art' – 'Art with its power of illusion, its capacity for negating reality, for setting up an "other scene" in opposition to reality' – and observes that *all* disappearing forms seek to duplicate themselves by simulation (1993: 14). In Baudrillard's terms the intensity and ubiquity of aesthetics produce a 'profusion of images' in which there is nothing to see but the grand illusion of the spectacle.

André Lepecki's reading of Kantor's 'room of memory' and his discussion of the invisibility of the dance is an example of recent work that is pointing towards the dematerialization of the 'object of per-formance'. It is not only the art object that is dema-terializing. The ephemerality of performance itself becomes more and more the locus of critical thinking. The dematerialized trace and 'origin' of dance and its recollection in the act of writing bring to bear another contemporary theorization of the illusion/real as the 'spectacle' – the commodifica-tion of life – which increasingly erodes the realm of 'free' and 'unalienated experience'; or as Guy Debord (Plant 1992: 13) put it, 'the real consumer becomes a consumer of illusions. The commodity is this factually real illusion, and the spectacle is its general manifestation.'

Relations between the sonic and the visual occupy Nicholas Till in his review of the 1996 performances of Varèse's *Déserts* with accompany-ing film by Bill Viola; and Schubert's 'Winterreise' staged by Boltanski and Kalman.

The power of illusion is eating away at the edges and interstices of the 'real' as it is ordinarily consti-tuted. It is perhaps these moments of illusion that allow us to move forward in the way suggested by Matthew Goulish in his *Five Microlectures*, through attention to the 'clearly shifting detail' of accumulating moments that begin to constitute a 'recognizable pattern'.

Ideas of artifice and fabrication, and how they allow us to visualize and construct our cultural imaginaries, characterize the artist's pages we have commissioned for this issue. Rod Dickinson's work *W.S.H.* explores questions of agency in the relation between art and fabrication, hoaxing and illusion, whilst the pages from Rose English act as a sort of 'premonition' for an as yet unrealized show. Playing somewhere in between artifice and reality, the Swiss theatre artist Hans-Peter Litscher pays homage to the illustrious Italian mountainscape painter Giovanni Sagatini in *Caduta Massi*.

There are book reviews by Claire MacDonald, cris cheek and Peter Hulton, and the conversations of the issue close with a review by Richard Gough of the recently opened archive in Krakow which houses the work of Tadeusz Kantor and his company Cricot 2.

The shrine at Guadalupe haunts a second more recent image. At the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam (it is 1993) you can ascend a broad stairway from the entrance hall and the garde-robe that will bring you to the Gary Hill exhibition, which starts in the main gallery on the first floor. In front and to your right you will see an installation *Crux* (1983–7) consisting of five video monitors 'mounted on the wall positioned to suggest the con-figuration of a cross as well as the elements of the human body, respecting its proportions, with head, two hands, and two feet. ... A large, composite [moving] image, pieced together by the body's limbs, is presented on the monitors' (Stedelijk Museum 1993: 75). The place of the body, the torso itself, is absent, a void filled only with the imaginary implied

by the five flickering 'vitrines'. Moving further into the gallery you will reach the darkened entrance to *Tall Ships* (1992). This oracular installation consists of 'a completely dark, ninety-foot long corridor-like space, [in which] sixteen black and white images of people, varying in ethnic origin, age and gender, are projected directly onto the walls. No border of light defines the frame of the images: only the figures themselves give off light into the space. The last projection is on the back wall, at the end of the corridor' (Stedelijk 1993: 98). In this silent space, peopled by the moving and projected ghosts of the familiar, the everyday, the narratives of each 'meeting' are constructed by each one of us alone, the revelation no longer attempts to speak collectively within the logic of theatre. For some it is a play of light, a technical demonstration, a silent slide-show in an age of movies and home video; for others these mute meetings are filled with unspoken conversations, with intense emotional impact, a displacement between virtual and real space that is intensified to such an extent that we find ourselves 'taking place', a transformation that turns inside ourselves.

Illusion lies in the space between these two images of Guadalupe and the Stedelijk. And so with 'nimble conveyance' I must declare that this particular 'under hand' process of trying to let the constellations of material in this issue find a form has been made possible only by the work and generosity of others, in particular the contributors, all those who have read and commented on submissions for us, and not least Clancy, Claire, Richard and Simon Josebury, to whom I offer the final lines of Wallace Stevens's 1937 meditation on the impossibility of grasping the real, 'The Man with the Blue Guitar':

> We shall forget by day, except
> The moments when we chose to play
> The imagined pine, the imagined jay.

Ric Allsopp, Issue Editor, *On Illusion*

REFERENCES

Baudrillard, Jean (1993) *The Transparency of Evil*, London: Verso.

Baudrillard, Jean (1996) *The Perfect Crime*, London: Verso.

Blau, Herbert (1992) *To All Appearances*. PAJ, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Olson, Charles (1966) *Collected Writings*, ed. Robert Creeley, New York: New Directions.

Plant, Sadie (1992) *The Most Radical Gesture*, London: Routledge.

Plesniarowicz, Krzysztof (1994) *The Dead Memory Machine*, trans. William Brand, Krakow Cricoteka.

(1997)

Editorial for 'Letters from Europe'

Editorial
A Letter to You

Their neighbours wrap the peach trees on the house wall
In little white rags against the night frost.
(Bertolt Brecht, *Nature Poems II*, c. 1937)

I don't believe in communication, I believe in conflict.
(Heiner Müller)

January is a good time to plant trees – at least in the temperate south-west of England where I live. We planted five apple trees (Tom Putt, Reynold's Peach, Pig's Snout) – as part of a larger local effort to restore native varieties to the environment, and to re-establish the apple orchards that once gave the region what is now called its 'local distinctiveness'. Whilst we dug holes, knocked in stakes, sprinkled bone-meal under the roots, planted the trees, and pressed down the earth, an inescapable feeling of commitment to a locality, to a continuity, to the particular, linked itself to a train of connections and thoughts – the chance meetings and conversations, the letters, postcards, and e-mails that have become Letters from Europe.

Tree planting is a resonant act at whatever level it is carried out – investing a set of personal or

public memories within the act – attaching a significance beyond the purely functional. I thought of the memorials that this issue contains – to the dead of Ulster, and to the Catalan artist Esteve Graset who died in April last year – and the differences with which those passings (in Bill Viola's sense) are marked or inscribed. The archives that I visited in Amsterdam (MonteVideo) and Cologne (Deutsches Tanzarchiv) in the autumn stand also as living and developing testimonies to the continuing visions of their founders and their archivists and the presence of artists linking the past to the future.

The places of art and performance are widely diverse and are not as we might suppose necessarily subject to an overriding view or voice. Views of what constitutes performance and how it communicates or conflicts with people differ sharply. Liljana Sedlar's Letter from Belgrade discussing her reaction to what she describes as the institutional legitimization and promotion of particular forms of performance work is a case in point. I am struck by the fact that what seem to be the central aesthetic and cultural concerns of 'western Europe' rapidly become marginal and peripheral as locality shifts and different geographic and cultural perspectives come into play. Dragan Klaic argues in his letter that if we are to secure the arts as the 'only viable cornerstone of European integration' it requires placing the arts within a broader socioeconomic picture, elaborating a linkage between culture and cultural industry, recognizing mutual dependencies and benefits.

Ideas of performance fall beyond the differences of language with which we habitually refer to them. I remembered sitting in a bar in Germany with the musician and light designer Michael Vorfeld after hearing his live acoustic percussion work. We talked about notation and I asked how he might make a light and sound work for the page.

I liked your point about the particularity of letters, their localism, the way in which they intercede between the live and the written – somehow not quite fixed, not yet congealed into the solidity (and authority) of 'text'. This fluidity, and the difficulties of placing the text with any surety and finality within performance, is also what the

issue starts to touch on in its discussions of text and dramaturgy. The letter forms a communication between the displacements and dislocations of text and image – a 'discharge of energy' between two shifting and uncertain poles – a means of building up an accumulation of details through which other voices, other images begin to appear. This seems close to Hans-Thies Lehmann's view:

> If theatre used to be defined as a kind of fictive cosmos presented to a public by means of theatre signs, theatre now tends more and more to be defined as a special and unique *situation* ... in the sense of the construction of a theatrical moment where a kind of communication different from everyday talk could possibly, virtually, structurally happen.

As I re-read these Letters from Europe now, much of the issue seems to be concerned with the place of the text (fluid or solid) as, in, through performance. John Hall, in his continuing series on grammar and performance, marks the placing of writing and speech as performative events in themselves through the ways in which grammar acts as a means of actualizing language in writing, speech and thought. Nick Kaye in his interviews with Needcompany observes that in their work 'the text is a surface against which other things are seen': letters point to images beyond the text – always open, like performance, to a 'falling out of language, out of the principal structures of meaning' as Rudi Laermans puts it. Letters point to the silences and gaps that have opened up in the structures of the art work as much as in the realities of individual and community conflict in Bosnia, in Ulster, in so many cities and places of Europe.

It is perhaps in these moments that the letters begin again – communications from the living, conversations with history, with the dead, with the 'not-anymore', with the 'not-yet' – conversations that begin to solidify into texts, into the edifices of identity, ideology, of persuasion, or prejudice that performance might challenge, undercut in its transitory but effective discharges.

Ric Allsopp
Devon, 26 January 1997

viii

(1999)

Editorial for 'On Line'

Editorial

Utterance Zero

Almost 40 years ago at the beginnings of the 'new electric age' Marshall McLuhan ended his study of 'the making of typographic man' by observing that:

> Even without collision, such co-existence of technologies and awareness brings trauma and tension to every living person. Our most ordinary and conventional attitudes seem suddenly twisted into gargoyles and grotesques. Familiar institutions and associations seem at times menacing and malignant. These multiple transformations, which are the normal consequence of introducing new media into any society whatever, need special study. . . .' (1962: 278–9)

Even since our initial discussions for an issue on performance and digital media, both the technologies and 'the *forms* of experience and of mental outlook and expression', as McLuhan put it, have been transformed. Digital technology is no longer so much 'out there', accessible only to research institutions or specialists, but is 'right here' – becoming rapidly available in the mass market and 'interiorized' in our general consciousness. 'When technology extends one of our senses, a new translation of culture occurs as swiftly as the new technology is interiorized' (McLuhan 1962: 41). The domain of performance arts (reflective, explorative, confrontational) is both absorbed and transformed by the impact of new media technologies: performance and technology interpret and challenge each other.

The 'constellation of events' which make up this issue were chosen from a flood of high-quality submissions. We wanted in particular to point towards the less familiar registers and sensibilities of european performance research, for example the constellation of work from artists and scholars in Slovenia [Bojana Kunst, Marina Grzinic and Marko Peljhan]. Despite the apparent ubiquity of digital media and its ability to open up virtual spaces that resist the pull of conventional 'geography', digital media and its performance remain intimately linked with localized conditions and attitudes. There is an emphasis too on the impact of digital media on our perceptions of and use of the body which might enable us to re-examine cultural issues and values embedded and inscribed in the body and, by extension, in architecture and wider constructs of the 'body politic'.

We have also wanted to include work that is not so obviously related to the 'on line' theme (for example Paul Carter's 'Invisible Theatre' and Enzo Cozzi et al. 'The Laughing Dead . . .') to remind ourselves that both the digital world and the vernacular tradition are powerfully concerned with 'ghosts', with the ability to create other worlds, to transform the means of being in the world through performance.

Ivan Illich, another commentator on the impact of print culture on consciousness has argued that 'memory is a child of the alphabet' (Illich 1989: 15). What will be the equivalent offspring of digital media? The articles, reviews, utterances and artist's pages gathered in this issue explore the impact of digital media both on performance and wider cultural practices and values. They begin, like the images from Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's installation 'Re-Positioning Fear' [see pp. 52–6], to 'shadow' a very different sense of what constitutes 'performance' in a digital environment, and what transforms the modes of understanding our 'worlds'. Finally (with generous support from the Arts Council of England) we have been able to commission digital work from UK artists for the first *Performance Research* CD-ROM which accompanies this issue [see p. ii]. I would like to thank all who have contributed to this issue of *Performance Research*, in particular Clancy Pegg, Ros Spry, Huw Williams at Broadcast Solutions, and my indefatigable co-editor and colleague Scott deLahunta .

Ric Allsopp, East Allington, Devon, 15 July 1999

(2000)

Editorial for 'Openings'

Editorial: Openings

Openings that is, as two-way flow, as dynamic reaching outwards, drawing inwards and backwards, openings that displace the directionalities of time, visuality and expectation – seemed to be an appropriate fix for how performance work is presently being framed, discussed, rethought, contextualised, practised. Openings that is, as fluid, indeterminate, undecided, ambiguous fields for performance. The openness of performance, the increasing difficulties of positioning or defining or delimiting performance in old terms. Or perhaps opening a new book and smelling its pages, accepting that the traces of its processes pass through the openings of one's body and circulate, move (in) us stimulating the potential articulation of an exchange between inside/outside, visible/invisible, self/other. How to allow oneself to be open to displacements in the advent/event of meaning(s)? How to dance around the slide towards final solutions? To be open to not knowing, to the blindspots that ghost all ways of seeing. As the fields of performance shift and fracture in relation to altering contexts – whether contexts of media, of culture, of practice, of research – so the openness of the work, its capability of resisting conventional frames, of existing as a fragile, ephemeral flow or as resistant or playful intervention, becomes a significant vector of discourse.

The work of preparing and editing this issue is necessarily interwoven with our other activities in the field of performance. The conversations which have led to this particular set of materials are shot through with other readings, with work that we have made, that we have witnessed, with work that we were unable to include in these limited pages. We talked of Christopher Lloyd's Fester in *The Addams Family* film, lifting a book from a shelf in the gothic library, then opening it to unleash a storm that strikes his face and fills the room; its covers contain a virtual tempest that can only be calmed by snapshut closure, replacement on the shelf, return to the orderly. All books, all writing should be tempest-machines. Vortices. Energetic overflowings. Landscapes of the passage. Why else would one write? Why else would one read? Where does the wind travel, and how to attend to the trajectories and transient forms of the aeolian debris?

On a cold, sunlit day in February, a young Israeli art student begins to move a vast pile of empty blue or white 50-litre translucent plastic containers from where they lie abandoned, at one corner of the goods yard in the now disused railway station in Jerusalem, to an equally derelict room inside the railway sheds. The sounds of each of her journeys, the physical effort of dragging a train of ten or more containers threaded together on a rope, across the yard and over the cobbled stone floor of the shed, are recorded on a dictaphone in her coat pocket. This solitary cyclical work continues largely unobserved and unremarked throughout the morning. The derelict room gradually begins to fill with containers. At a certain point this part of the work stops. For those who now come across the work as spatial object, as suspended event, the room is left either half-filled or half-emptied – a train of containers abandoned either half-in or half-out of the doorway. Indeterminate taped sounds emerge from deep within the pile of containers – ambivalent, difficult to pinpoint spatially or descriptively. The openness of this work – the simplicity and clarity of its structure and its process; the complexity and ambiguity of its associations – provides a marker of the articulation of openness with which this present issue is concerned.

The philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy in *The Gravity of Thought* (1997) writes of meaning as opening, and invites us to think on the limit, to be 'passible'

(xvii) to the open character of the event of meaning, its inappropriable opening up at/of the limits of subjectivity. Opening of meaning – meaning as opening. Meaning's exposure at the limits. Thought that is ex-posed to the irrecuperable excess of and in meaning which Nancy terms the 'figure': 'A figure would be the entire weight of a thought: its way, not of "thinking" meaning (of elaborating its signification) but of letting it weigh, just as it comes, just as it passes away, heavy or light, and always at the same time heavy and light' (82).

The work of the American artist Morgan O'Hara (pp. 41–2 below) provides us with two 'live trans-missions' – traces of compassionate contemplations that displace the parameters of subjectivity by letting the elsew/here weigh, just as it comes, just as it passes away. The work is a small sample of an extensive and ongoing body of 'live transmissions' registering movement – particularly hand-movements – in all sorts of different contexts and circumstances. This work places itself at that opening between the fixity of registration and the ephemerality of what it registers, at the limits of attention to the solidity of event and the fluidity of its passing. It is surrounded in this issue by an array of articulations and propositions with regard to openings: in and of meaning, identity, percep-tion, the mapping of memory, the materiality of writing and its processes, the textualizing of the ephemeral, of dis/appearance. Brian Catlin's 'invisible shapeshifting mass', the blur of truth and death on its forehead: the writing of sculpture as 'an obstinate gift to the imagination, a curve from the seclusion of possession'. Anna Furse's desire to 'make jargon sing', by inscribing embodied histories of resonances and associations lurking within the cinders of past events and experiences. Lisa Lewis's mapping of the volatile nexus of memory, place, identity, and of the thresholds between constitutive space-times in 'Welshness'. John Downie's discussion of a 'cinematographic theatre' practice in New Zealand, drawing on Deleuze's notion of cinema as affecting 'the visible with a fundamental disturbance, and the world with

a suspension, which contradicts all natural percep-tion', producing 'the unthought in thought, the birth of the visible which is still hidden from view'. Carlyle Reedy's 'museum of the process' in work that Alaric Sumner celebrates as 'radically uncertain, constantly changing, unknowing – open to referential seepage'. Koen Tachelet's tracking of the inevitability of the 'meaningful absences' in blindspots, the no-man's-lands they create, and of interactive displacement as ethical responsibility. Valentina Valentini's account of the possible worlds in Heiner Müller's feral dramaturgy, of theatre as 'motion in a space studded with questions that have no answers'. The ambiguities and ellipses of Josef Nadj's work: the mysterious, the unfathomable, the labyrinthine, the blindness and in-sight of contem-plation. Joshua Sofaer's analysis of positionality, the fixity of meaning, and the continual reappraisal and reinvention of the role of the spectator (the winner of our annual Essay Competition entry).

The next issue of *Performance Research* – 'On Animals' (ed. Alan Read) – will extend these reflec-tions through materials which attempt to think (on) the limit of the 'human'. By way of a prefatory bridge towards this next issue, a fragment of Rainer Maria Rilke's eighth 'Duino Elegy':

> We know what is really out there only from the animal's gaze: for we take the very young child and force it around, so that it sees objects – not the Open, which is so deep in animals' faces. Free from death (Rilke, trans. Stephen Mitchell, 1987: 193).

For their invaluable help in the preparation of this issue, the issue editors would like to thank Clancy Pegg, Kevin Mount, Marta Braun, the Musée Marey in Beaune.

Ric Allsopp & David Williams

Section 4

Performance Texts

(1999)

'Firetables XII - Text for Machine Assisted Reading

Systems'

[pp. 180 - 186 following are un-numbered]

Fire Table XII

A Text for Machine Assisted Reading Systems*

....
....
.... v...... .v..... ..v... ....v.. .....v.
.......v ....v. ...v.. ...v.. ..v.... .v.... v...... .v..... ..v... ....v.. ....v. ....v ....v.. ...v.. ..v... .v..... .v..... v......
.v..... ....v... ...v.. ....v ...v.. ...v... ..v... .v..... v...... .v..... ...v.. ...v... ....v. ....v ....v. ...v... ..v....
...v... ..v.... .v..... v...... .v..... ...v..... .v.... ....v. ....v ....v... ...v... ..v... .v..... .v..... v...... .v..... ...v... ...v....
.....v. ....v ...v.. ...v... ..v.... ...v..... ...v... ..v..... .v.... ...v... ....v ...v.... .v..... ....v... ....v... ..v.....v....
v...... .v..... ..v.... ...v... ....v. ....v ...v.. ...v... ..v... .v..... .v..... v...... vi.....v.i... v..i... v...i... v....i. v....i
v.....i v....i. v...i... v..i... v.i... vi..... vis.... vi.s... vi..s.. vi...s. vi....s. vi...s. vi.s.. vi.s.. vi.s... vis.... visi... vis.i...
vis..i. vis...i vis...i vis..i. vis.i... visi... visib.. visi.b. visi..b visi.b. visib.. visibl. visib.l visibl. visible m..... .m....
..m... ...m.. ...m... ....m ....m. ...m.. ..m... .m.... m..... m...... me.... m.e... m..e.. m...e. m....e m...e m...e. m..e.
m.e... me.... mem... me.m.. me..m. me....m me..m. me.m... mem... memo.. mem.o. mem..o mem.o. memo..
memor. memo.r memor. memory memory memory memory memory memory memory memor. memo.r
memor. memo.. mem.o. mem..o mem.o. memo.. mem... me.m.. me..m. me....m me..m. me.m.. mem...
me.... m.e... m..e.. m....e m....e m....e. m.e... m.e... me.... m...... .m..... ..m... ...m.. ....m. ....m ...m.. ..m.. ...m..
..m... .m.... m..... m..... visible visibl. visib.l visibl. visib.. visi.b. visi..b visi.b. visib.. visi... vis.i... vis..i.
vis...i vis..i. vis.i.. visi... vis.... vi.s... vi..s.. vi...s. vi....s. vi...s. vi.s.. vis.... vi.....v.i... v..i... v...i... v....i. v....i.
v.....i v.....l v....i. v..i.. v..i.. v.i.. v.i.... vi..... v...... .v...... ...v... ...v... ....v. ....v ..v.. .v..... ..v... ..v... .v...... .v......
v...... v....... .v..... ...v... ....v. ....v. ....v ....v... .v..... ..v... .v..... .v..... v...... v...... .v..... ...v.. ...v... ....v.
.......v ....v.. ...v.. ...v... ..v.... ..v..... v...... v...... ....v... .v..... ..v... .v..... .v..... .v..... v...... v...... ...v... ...v... ....v. .v......
v...... v........ .v..... ...v... ...v... ....v. ....v ...v.. ...v... ...v... ..v... .v... .v..... v...... ....
....
.... v...... .v...... ..v... ....v.. ....v. ....v ....v.. ...v.. ...v....
.v..... v....... vi.....v.i... v..i... v..i... v...i. v....i v....i v.....i v.....i v...i. v..i.. v.i... v.i... vi... vis.... vi.s.. vi..s.. vi...s.
vi....s. vi...s. vi..s.. vi..s. vis.... visi... vis.i.. vis..i. vis....i vis.i.. visi... visib.. visibl. visible f... visible

fi.. visible fir. visible fire .ire ..re ...e .... 1. The active principle operative in combustion; popularly conceived as a substance visible in the form of a flame or of ruddy glow or incandescence.

[....]12. Fever, inflammation; disease as a consuming agency ME. 13. fig. (sense 1). a. Ardour of passion, esp. of love or rage ME. b. Ardour of temperament; courage, zeal, enthusiasm, spirit. [....] 2. Table [- L. tabula plank, tablet, list ....] I. A flat slab or board. [....] 2. spec. a. A tablet bearing or intended for an inscription or device. [....] †3. A board or other flat surface on which a picture is painted; hence the picture itself - 1700. [....] II. A raised board at which persons may sit. 1. An article of furniture consisting of a flat top [...] and used to place things on for various purpose, as for meals, for some work or occupation, or for ornament. [....] Tabulary [- L. tabularium record-office, archives, f. tabula TABLE] [...] A place where the public records were kept [....] ric allsopp b c d e f g h i j k l m n o physical data e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z a b c d e f g h i j k l m normal heart rate: 84 beats per minute o p q r s t u v w x y z a blood pressure: 150/80 mmHg c d e f g height: 1.70 metres i j k l m n o p q r s t u v weight:74.7 kilograms x y z a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r skinfold measurement: tricep:12 mm u v w x y z a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r subscapular: 20.2 mm t u v w x y z a bicep: 6.2 mm c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r suprilliac: 16.2 mm total: 54.6 mm u v w x y z a b c d e figure measurement: g h i j k l m n o p q r shoulders: 115 cm t u v w x y z a b chest: 98 cm d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v waist: 93 cm x y z a b c d e f g hips: 101 cm ric allsopp b c d e f g h i j k l m n o physical data e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z a b c d e f g h i j k l m normal heart rate: 84 beats per minute o p q r s t u v w x y z a blood pressure: 150/80 mmHg c d e f g height:1.70 metres i j k l m n o p q r s t u v weight:74.7 kilograms x y z a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r skinfold measurement: tricep:12 mm u v w x y z a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r subscapular: 20.2 mm t u v w x y z a bicep: 6.2 mm c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r suprilliac: 16.2 mm total: 54.6 mm u v w x y z a b c d e figure measurement: g h i j k l m n o p q r shoulders: 115 cm t u v w x y z a b chest: 98 cm d e f g

h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v waist: 93 cm x y z a b c d e f g hips: 101 cm memory erased memory erased

memory erased

keep your lips still keep your eyes still keep your lips still keep your eyes still keep your lips still keep your eyes still keep your lips still keep your eyes still keep your lips still keep your eyes still keep your lips still keep your eyes still keep your lips still keep your eyes still keep your lips still keep your eyes still storage is externalised keep your lips still keep your eyes still keep your lips still storage is externalised keep your eyes still keep your lips still keep your eyes still keep your lips still keep your eyes still keep your lips still keep your eyes

still

FIRE

keep your lips still keep your eyes still

still

still

b....... b....... b....... b....... b....... b.c..... b.c..... b.c..... b.c..... b.c..... b.c..... b.c..... b.c..... b.co.... b.co....
b.co.... b.co.... b.co.... b.co.... b.co.... b.co..n. b.co..n. b.co..n. b.co..n. b.co..n. b.co..n. b.co..n. beco..n.
beco..n. beco..n. beco..n. beco..n. beco..n. beco..n. beco..ng beco..ng beco..ng beco..ng beco..ng
beco..ng beco..ng beco.ing beco.ing beco.ing beco.ing beco.ing beco.ing beco.ing becoming becoming
becoming becoming becoming becoming becoming ..v...... ..v...... ..v...... ..v...... ..v...... ..v...... ..v......
..vi...... ..vi...... ..vi...... ..vi...... ..vi...... ..vi...... ..vi...... ..vi.i.... ..vi.i.... ..vi.i.... ..vi.i.... ..vi.i.... ..vi.i.... ..vi.i.... ..vi.ib..
..vi.ib.. ..vi.ib.. ..vi.ib.. ..vi.ib.. ..vi.ib.. ..vi.ib.. .nvi.ib.. .nvi.ib.. .nvi.ib.. .nvi.ib.. .nvi.ib.. .nvi.ib.. .nvi.ib..
.nvi.ib.e .nvi.ib.e .nvi.ib.e .nvi.ib.e .nvi.ib.e .nvi.ib.e .nvisib.e .nvisib.e .nvisib.e .nvisib.e .nvisib.e
.nvisib.e .nvisib.e invisib.e invisib.e invisib.e invisib.e invisib.e invisib.e invisib.e invisible invisible

fire under fire on fire under fire between the eye and its object? between hand and mouth? between an action and its consequence? between a kiss and a betrayal? between touch and remembering? between a footfall and fear? between a knock and

silence?

between writing and its inscription? between the table and the chair?

Keep the eye still. The tongue silent. The ear closed. The lips sealed. The wing clipped.

The writing is on the screen.

Oxidation of writing.

letters burned burned burned burned buried buried burned banned banned banned banned burned

buried on the skin tongue fire eye mouth lips oxidation of writing, swollen letters crumble like memory

swollen letters crumble like memory swollen letters crumble like memory swollen letters crumble like

memory swollen letters crumble like memory swollen letters crumble like memory swollen letters

crumble like memory swollen letters crumble like memory swollen letters crumble like memory swollen

letters oxidation of writing crumble like memory swollen letters crumble like memory

letters burned on the skin

oxidation of writing

oxid.tion of writing oxid.tion of writing oxid.tion of writing oxid.tion of writing ox.d.t.on of wr.t.ng

ox.d.t.on of wr.t.ng ox.d.t.on of wr.t.ng ox.d.t.on of wr.t.ng ox.d.t.on of wr.t.ng ox.d.t.on of wr.t.ng

ox.d.t.on of wr.t.ng ox.d.t.on of wr.t.ng ox.d.t.on of wr.t.ng .x.d.t..n .f wr.t.ng .x.d.t..n .f wr.t.ng .x.d.t..n .f

wr.t.ng .x.d.t..n .f wr.t.ng .x.d.t..n .f wr.t.ng .x.d.t..n .f wr.t.ng .x.d.t..n .f wr.t.ng .x.d.t..n .f wr.t.ng .x.d.t..n

.f wr.t.ng .x.d.t..n .f wr.t.ng .x.d.t..n .f wr.t.ng .x.d.t..n .f wr.t.ng .x.d.t... .f wr.t..g .x.d.t... .f wr.t..g .x.d.t...

.f wr.t..g .x.d...... .f wr....g .x.d...... .f wr....g .x.d...... .f wr....g .x.d...... .f wr....g .x.d...... .f wr....g .x.d...... .f

wr....g .x.d...... .f wr....g .x.d...... .f wr....g .x.d...... .f wr....g .x.d...... .f wr....g .x.d...... .f wr....g .x.d...... .f

wr....g .x.d...... .f wr....g .x.d...... .f wr....g .x.d...... .f wr....g .x.d...... .f wr....g .x.d...... .f wr....g .x.d...... .f

w.....g .x.d...... .f w.....g .x.d...... .f w.....g .x.d...... .f w.....g .x.d...... .f w.....g .x.d...... .f w.....g .x.d...... .f w.....g

.x.d...... .f w.....g .x.d...... .f w.....g .x.d...... .f w.....g ...d...... .f w.....g ...d...... .f w.....g ...d...... .f w.....g ...d...... .f

w.....g ...d..... .f

w.....g ...d...... .f w.....g ...d...... .f w.....g ...d..... .f w.....g ...d..... .f w.....g ...d...... .f w.....g ...d...... .f w.....g ...d...... .f w.....g

...d...... .f w.....g ...d...... .f w.....g ...d...... .f w.....g w.....g w.....g w.....g w.....g w.....g wo....g wo....g wo....g

wo....g wo.....g wo....g wo....g wor...g wor...g wor...g wor...g wor...g wor...g wor...g wor...g

wor..ng wor..ng wor..ng wor..ng wor..ng wor..ng wor..ng wor..ng wor..ng wor.ing wor.ing

wor.ing wor.ing wor.ing wor.ing wor.ing wor.ing wor.ing wording wording wording wording wording

wording. Keep the mouth still. The tongue silent. The ear closed. The lips sealed. Keep the mouth still.

The tongue silent. The ear closed. The lips sealed. Keep the mouth still. The tongue silent. The ear closed.

The lips sealed.

The writing is on the screen.

a print-room. a concrete floor painted grey-blue.
large sliding windows all along one side. white flaking
plaster walls. an enamelled sink. a doorway at one
end. a large wooden table. three glasses. a desk-light.
a wooden stool. a stack of white paper a dip-pen and
a bottle of red liquid with a dropper. a metal flask a
small metal rod. a box of matches. a glass jug full of
clear liquid. a tape recorder. a 2 meter long metal
gutter suspended 1 meter from the floor. the gutter is
filled with clear liquid. a sheet of tempered steel with
23 wine glasses filled with clear liquid. an almost life-
size photograph of a naked man. his torso is obscured
by a metal sheet. a monitor standing on a pedestal 1.5
meters high. smell of methylates, oils and isopropylates

* Note:

Fir.-r.t.rd.nt ch.mic.ls function by th.ir .bility to "so.k up" r.dic.ls, thus t.rmin.ting th. ch.in r..ction. .xtr.m.ly r.pid combustion is c.ll.d .n .xplosion. This can occur if th. production of r.dic.ls gr..tly .xc..ds th. r.t. of ch.in t.rmin.tion, or if h..t buildup is gr..t .nough to .cc.l.r.t. th. r..ctions of v.ry r.pid r.t.s.[....]12. F.v.r, infl.mm.tion; dis..s. .s . consuming .g.ncy M.. 13. fig. (s.ns. 1). .. .rdour of p.ssion, .sp. of lov. or r.g. M.. b. .rdour of t.mp.r.m.nt; cour.g., z..l, .nthusi.sm, spirit. [....] th. sound.d word is .n .ction which f.st dis.pp..rs 2. Tabl. [- L. tabula plank, tabl.t, list ....] I. A flat slab or board. [....] 2. sp.c. a. A tabl.t b.aring or int.nd.d for an inscription or d.vice. [....] †3. A board or other flat surface on which a picture is painted; hence the picture itself - 1700. [....] still keep still keep still keep still keep still keep II. A raised board at which persons may sit. 1. An article of furniture consisting of a flat top [...] and used to place things on for various purpose, as for meals, for some work or occupation, or for ornament. [....] Tabulary [- L. tabularium record-office, archives, f. tabula TABLE] [...]
A place where the public records were kept

T A B L E

[END]

* This performance text should be read at 451 words per minute.

Fire Table XII was performed by Ric Allsopp for 'Crossing Time' at Dartington Arts Gallery, Devon, UK on 27 February 1998 as part of a continuing series (1989 - 1999) of live performance/ imstallations involving fire as a metaphoric and actual material.

(2000)

'Circulate II'

in

Inner Spaces, ed. Tomek Wendland

Posnan: Inner Spaces Multimedia

[pp. 188 - 191 following are un-numbered]

circulate II

LOST: a square wooden table placed near a wall in the centre of the gallery, a chair, on the table a parcel wrapped with brown paper and string, a pen, three small bottles with droppers, a box of matches, a low metal tripod, a metal bowl, an aluminium handle, a block of beeswax, a bottle of isopropyl alcohol, three small glass bowls, a candle, a metal spirit stove, a pair of tweezers, a pocket knife.

A B C IRCULATE II D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z A B C D E F G
H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U
V W X Y Z A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z A B C D E F G H
I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z ARCHIVE B C D E F G H I J K L M N O PHYS-
ICAL DATA E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z A B C D E F G H I J K L
M NORMAL HEART RATE: 84 BEATS PER MINUTE O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z A
BLOOD PRESSURE: 150/80 MM HG C D E F G HEIGHT: 1.70 METRES I J K L M N
O P Q R S T U V WEIGHT:74.7 KILOGRAMS X Y Z A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P
Q R SKINFOLD MEASUREMENT: TRICEP:12 MM U V W X Y Z A B C D E F G H I J
K L M N O P Q R SUBSCAPULAR: 20.2 MM T U V W X Y Z A BICEP: 6.2 MM C D
E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R SUPRILLIAC: 16.2 MM TOTAL: 54.6 MM U V W X Y Z
A B C D E FIGURE MEASUREMENT: G H I J K L M N O P Q R SHOULDERS: 115
CM T U V W X Y Z A B CHEST: 98 CM D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V WAIST:
93 CM X Y Z A B C D E F G HIPS: 101 CM ARCHIVE B C D E F G H I J K L M N O
PHYSICAL DATA E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z A B C D E F G H I J
K L M NORMAL HEART RATE: 84 BEATS PER MINUTE O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
A BLOOD PRESSURE: 150/80 MMHG C D E F G HEIGHT:1.70 METRES I J K L M N
O P Q R S T U V WEIGHT:74.7 KILOGRAMS X Y Z A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P
Q R SKINFOLD MEASUREMENT: TRICEP:12 MM U V W X Y Z A B C D E F G H I J
K L M N O P Q R SUBSCAPULAR: 20.2 MM T U V W X Y Z A BICEP: 6.2 MM C D
E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R SUPRILLIAC: 16.2 MM TOTAL: 54.6 MM U V W X Y Z
A B C D E FIGURE MEASUREMENT: G H I J K L M N O P Q R SHOULDERS: 115 CM
T U V W X Y Z A B CHEST: 98 CM D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V WAIST:
93 CM X Y Z A B C D E F G HIPS: 101 CM.

CIRCULATE II

AB   DEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZABCDEFG
HIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTU
VWXYZABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZABCDEFGH
IJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ   BCDEFGHIJKLMNO
          EFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZABCDEFGHIJKL
M   OPQRSTUVWXYZA
                    CDEFG   IJKLMN
OPQRSTUV   XYZABCDEFGHIJKLMNOP
QR   UVWXYZABCDEFGHIJ
KLMNOPQR   TUVWXYZA   CD
EFGHIJKLMNOPQR   UVWXYZ
ABCDE   GHIJKLMNOPQR
    TUVWXYZAB   DEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUV
     XYZABCDEFG   BCDEFGHIJKLMN
O   EFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZABCDEFGH
IJKLM   OPQRSTUVWXY
ZA   CDEFG   IJKLM
NOPQRSTUV   XYZABCDEFGHIJKLMN
OPQR   UVWXYZABCDEFG
HIJKLMNOPQR   TUVWXYZA
CDEFGHIJKLMNOPQR   UVWX
YZABCDE   .   GHIJKLMNOPQR
    TUVWXYZAB   DEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUV
     X Y Z A B C D E F G

CIRCULATE II

circulate II

ands like clo ds or jewels the sea bel
ence o   a artme   o ly tap   a
artme   n blue s   a the   on
nd w   w bac   th r tho   -
not   he He   ec the   en
ice   n sh ha   d, th sp   f bl
of   rmpi   o   faint ng g tast
d t ell her hat   [...] h r, bu he wa
s af id of it imp cations ts fl p-side, i
mal attracti , a mingling of tastes, the
There was s nething bey nd this - som

they ha sp ken to e h o her abo t w
laying   it r at th   e end o   r
, the   a d noi   el of   an
on th   il y of a   ua e he   ot
nte   e er c   ne he   a
o n   is b dy,   el [.] o   ing
ed   orts o em ns in im   ch b
n't s p think ng a out the way er [...]
nbe d the s ength of her hand s as she
He thought bout the ma y things the
r, he phot graph s of her as a child. Th

e wanted to tell her that there
her dark hair, her eyes, her g
on of feeling of unspoken agre
remembered   ing   ed mu
ning He could re
ng at the doorway of the club on the
that he would never be a part of - a wo
are   ory of a place they were both exile
I he wanted to   ght with her, he wanted her
r in the palm of his hand. He realised that she
b him, to alter the climate of his body. He
d his as they lay in bed together. He
uilt on the wooden floor of her
is of her father in his unifor
encil and later the words

Section 5

Documentation

(1996)

'Interiors - Exteriors - Turnarounds'

in

Rick Allsopp

INTERIORS - EXTERIORS - TURN-AROUNDS

Unsere Arbeitsmethode wird sein, Material aus der Körpererfahrung, aus szenischen Vorgaben und aus Metaphern zu gewinnen und dieses unter Verwendung des Collage- bzw. Montageprinzips zu bearbeiten.
Dieser Prozess der symbolischen Spiegelungen - den Bildern Leben zu geben - könnte z.B. mit Überlegungen zur Körperhaftigkeit oder mit schriftlichen Ausarbeitungen beginnen. Auch abstraktere oder themenbezogenere Ansätze wären möglich.
Wir werden zwei verwandte Performance-Installationen entwickeln - eine im Innenraum und eine andere, die durch das Außengelände definiert wird.
Innen: ambiente Klänge, Abwesenheit oder zumindest nur minimale Spuren der Darsteller/Darstellerinnen; Auflösung (natürliche Prozesse, z.B. schmelzendes Eis) über einen längeren Zeitraum; Rückkehr zum ursprünglichen Zustand, aber trotzdem eine Spur von Anwesenheit hinterlassend.
Außen: Verwandlung, Auflösung (natürliche Prozesse, z.B. Feuer) über einen relativ kurzen Zeitraum; Pfade, die durch die Anwesenheit der Performer animiert werden.
Zum Thema „TURN-AROUNDS" werden wir uns von der Idee zur Aktion (Performance/Installation) bewegen, über die Prozesse des Schreibens, der physischen Performance, der Konstruktion und der Geländeforschung. Wir werden persönliche und gemeinsame Erfahrungen in Form von Bildern aufsuchen, um performance- und geländespezifische Strukturen zu schaffen.
Übergänge - Übersetzungen - Verwandlungen - Umkehrungen - Inversionen - Konvertierungen - Verlagerungen - Umwälzungen - Auflösung - Verbindungen - Wiederholungen - Gegensätze - Brücken - Durchgänge - Pfade - Orpheus und Eurydike - Geisterhäuser - Anwesenheit - Abwesenheit - lebendig - statisch - innen - außen - Eis - Feuer - Morgendämmerung - Abenddämmerung - Spielen - Schleifen - Zyklen...„TURN-AROUNDS".

„Imagination is always considered to be the faculty of forming images. But it is rather the faculty of deforming the images offered by perception, of freeing ourselves from the immediate images: it is especially the faculty of changing images."
(Gaston Bachelard)

1. DESCRIPTION

The Theatre Workshop was made in two parts with 14 participants from Germany, Poland and Lithuania. Part I (Days 1-4) was concerned with generating material and providing exercises and models of processes that lead to performance. Part II (Days 5-8) was concerned with making two linked performance/ installations, one interior and one exterior.

DAY I

Bodywork:
A sequence of stretches/ isolations based in Release Technique combined with walking/ running and spatial awareness exercises. The body in relation to itself and the space/ time it occupies.

Image I - Journey
Making an individual representation in 2-dimensions of the journey to Scheersberg using paper, colour, found objects. In pairs extending this individual representation/ map/ trace through speech - not describing what is already present, but extending it in other ways.

Image II - Home
Making an individual representation (ideal/symbolic/literal) in 3-dimensions of Home, using card, string, paper, wood, colour, found objects etc. In pairs extending this image through speech.

Finding a Site
In small groups (3-4) finding an (exterior) site in which to make an action with object (the 3-D representation of home). Considering edges, corners, openings, voids etc.

Making an Action:
To make a short simple action involving the object
a) in relation to site;
b) in relation to other objects; and
c) in relation to performer. For example the object might be placed, suspended, ignited, flown, eaten, buried, given, etc.
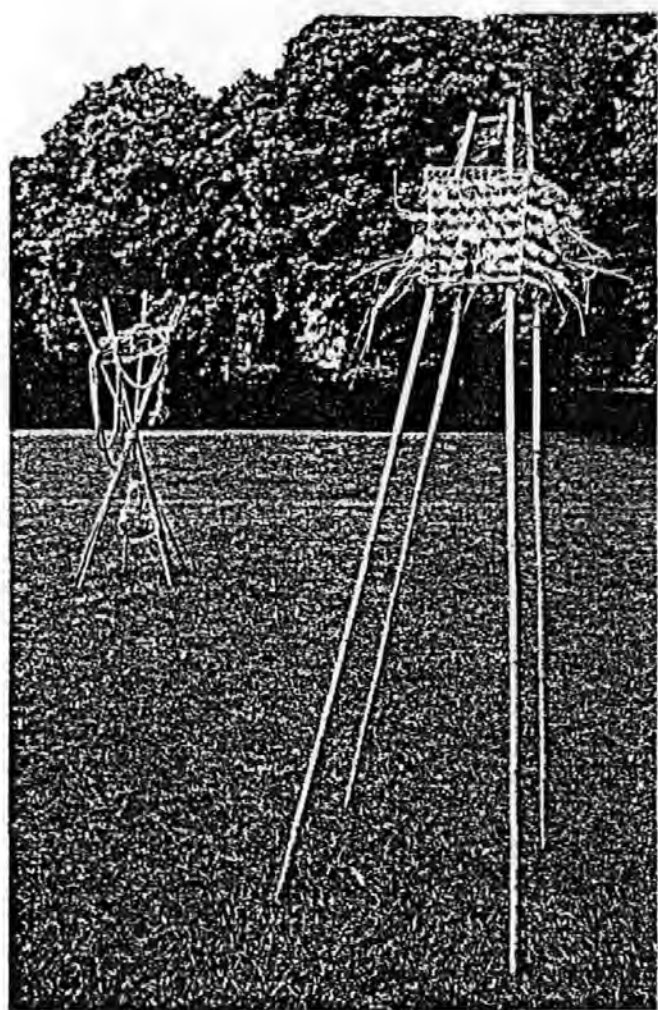
DAY II

Bodywork
Sequence of stretches/isolations as Day I: rolling, crawling, standing, walking, running: spatial awareness (speed, dynamic, edges, centre, gaps, openings); the body in relation to others in time/space: sensation and the back - 'grandma's footsteps' - vulnerability (individual/group).

Image III - Fear
Making an individual representation (symbol/container) in 3-dimensions for Fear using card, string, paper, wood, colour, found objects etc.. In pairs/groups extending this image through speech. The object as focus of attraction/mediator of meanings.

Working with Objects
Find a place/site for the object (interior).
Find individual action in relation to your object.
Consider where the action begins and where it ends - what is its shape and detail.
Try to repeat the action.
Enlarge the action in space/time/dynamic/gesture/movement.
Reduce the action to its essential elements.
Remove the object and repeat the action.
In pairs teach your action(s) to each other - this makes you think about what is essential.
Learn the combinations (AA-BB, AB-BA etc.).

Making an Action (Collage)
In 3-4 pairs (half the group) show actions simultaneously. Repeat considering listening to time/timing - the relationship of everything that is happening within the action. When to make a move, to begin, to stop, to pause etc. Returning to the memory/experience of the object, let this inform your actions. The way in which actions/objects fill with and empty themselves of meaning.

Dias/ Slides
Selection of 37 dias/slides on the Western European representation of landscape; Land Art, representations of home and body; UK performance/installations with commentary and questions.

DAY III

Bodywork
Sequence of stretches/isoloations as Day I: rolling, crawling, standing, walking, running: spatial awareness (speed, dynamic, loss of balance/control, circling); the body in contact/touch with others. Interactions based on touch - release of tension/giving weight.

Simple Actions
In pairs working with simple actions: for example dancing, washing, embracing, carrying. Two individuals standing apart in space; they turn/move and meet in a simple action/interaction; they part. Consider entrances and exits - where the action begins, where it ends, how it meets with another. The central idea here is to try and focus on the simplicity of the present moment, the action of doing something in the present (giving, taking, touching), rather than 'acting out' an image of the present moment - the thing itself rather than the thought about the thing. As with Day II - repeat, extend, enlarge/reduce the actions; learn combinations: show in pairs.

Image IV - Pathways
Extending the image of 'journey': In small groups find an exterior site an make a clear pathway for an audience that leads over/across a boundary/threshold and changes in some way (for example the pathway might lead from an enclose landscape to an open one; from flat to hilly; from light to dark; from outside to inside etc.). The morning's 'simple actions' should be used in relation to the pathway. The image of a Journey to another world.

Making an Action
An audience is lead (in various ways) along a pathway. A beginning - a change - an end. Questions arise - how is the spectator supported - coaxed/ embraced/coerced/mislead/celebrated? How is the space of performance (and thus the audience's vision) structured? What images are presented to the audience and how? The 'pathways' exercise provides stimulus for discussion and feedback.

DAY IV:

Bodywork
Sequence of stretches/isolations as Day I: rolling, crawling, standing, walking, running: spatial awareness (speed, dynamic, loss of balance/control, circling), tag & group tag; the body in contact/touch with another - taking/giving responsibility. These 'trust' exercises in pairs responded to the Day III discussion on 'audience' and pathways: With a partner -

— **117**

a) one person on the floor (eyes shut) being moved/pulled through space;
b) lifting person on floor to standing - this is a literal problem of shifting weight;
c) person standing falling backwards/ forwards - catching/supporting weight;
d) leading standing person through space - different dynamics. The partner then swap roles and repeat.
   Discussion of imagery involved - considering actual situations in which this type of interaction is seen.

Simple Actions

Developing Day III's work with emphasis on carrying/ taking weight: trying to (re)find the physical immediacy of the tasks undertaken above (lifting/carrying/ catching) in a more formalised/ prepared performance situation. Trying to form/give shape to a simple of an image. The relationship of risk and control. Introducing interruptions/obstacle/repetitions in the actions.

Image V - Pathways

Repeating Day III's assignment and building on experience and additional work on 'trust' and 'simple action'. To extend the possibilities for imagery and relationship to audience. Emphasis on the moment of transformation/change within each piece.

Making an Action

An audience is lead (in various ways) along a pathway. A beginning - a change - an end. The elements of the piece begin to shift - different solutions to the problems of choice of space, use of objects, treatment of audience, use of action etc. emerge. The evening is spent reviewing the first four days work and proposing a framework for building a performance during second four-day period.

Days V-VII

Part 2 of the workshop consisted in developing the following elements towards two linked performance installations. The days were less formally structured as the shape and dynamic of the performances became clearer and started to determine what needed to be done.

Materials

To work with 'natural' elements and their transformations: the body/fire/ice/salt/ steel/wood/light (artificial/ natural)/interior space, exterior space, ambient sound.

Bodywork

Each day started with a sequence of stretches/isolations as Days I-IV: rolling, crawling, standing, walking, running: spatial awareness (speed, dynamic, loss of balance/control, circling); the body as individual; in relation to others etc.

Portraits

Exploring the ways in which an image/action takes up meanings - the process of 'thickening towards image' - the relation between a physical action and a verbal/ written caption: task - a) to write a caption beginning 'I am ...' or 'A man/woman who ...'; b) to find an action or photographic pose that extends/ contradicts/ subverts the meaning of the caption. The idea here is to move beyond the descriptive, the first idea, the familiar relationship between what is seen and what is 'said' - towards making the familiar unfamiliar.

Group Work

This work extends the individual/paired attentions of bodywork into group work: the group as both a collection of individuals and as a single 'organism'. It also starts to deal with the discrepancies between the experience of the performer in making an action/ image and the experience of the audience 'reading' the action/ image. Using 9 performers seated close together on stools in a square formation: for example a sequence of actions -

a) 'emptiness' - the individual involved with his/ her own sensations;
b) awareness of others - using eyes, heads to make contact with others;
c) touching others using heads/hands;
d) passing a glass of water through the group - trying to sense the group as a whole;
e) speaking memories, trains of thought prompted by sensation of drinking water;
f) speaking to others or to audience;
g) eating a piece of fruit;
h) standing, sitting, leaving the square or returning to the square;
i) returning to emptiness etc.

The main idea here is to sense the dynamic of the individual/group as it moves and develops through time; to work towards a collective image that is determined by a simple set of instructions/ actions; to be both inside and outside the action at the same time - a kind of 'double inscription' - to feel what is happening within the group and to give it shape and dynamic as performance image - eg. how do you decide when to move, to speak, to stand, to exit etc. - the relationship between individual and collective action.

118

Simple Actions - Pairs
Working on simple actions in pairs and developing these into a series of repeatable and formalised images in relation to a built object/structure ('spirit houses'). This develops the technique of collage/ montage composition - placing materials in relationship to one another (actions/ objects) to see what images begin to take shape.

Spirit Houses
Extending the images of 'home' a number of 'spirit houses' were build, each free standing on four 2 metre bamboo legs. The intention here was for each pair of performers to make a representation that could in some way contain hopes, fears aspirations, doubts and that could be seen in relation to 'simple actions'.

Pathways
Exterior: constructing a pathway of cut wood that leads the audience to the site of the 'spirit houses'. Interior: constructing a pathway of salt connecting the various formal elements used.

DAY VIII: PERFORMANCE

Interior: (9.30-10.15 pm)
The audience (in groups of 20 for 5-10 minutes) was invited to see three types of process: a 'natural' process (ice converting to steam); a behavioural process (a group of 12 people negotiating a set of performance rules); a metaphor or image of process (a pathway of salt). A darkened room. Three square steel plates raised slightly above a wooden floor and connected by a line of salt. The first plate is lit from underneath. The line of salt crossing its surface pours from/or into a drinking glass. Above the second plate hangs a block of ice, lit from above, in which are frozen signs of human presence. It melts onto the steel plate which is heated by fire from underneath. The water boils off into steam. The salt line passes underneath the plate which is surrounded with drinking glasses. The third plate, lit from above, holds a ripped burlap sack from/into which the line of salt pours. Near the block of ice, in a corner of the darkened room, sit 12 people on stools (four rows of three). They are still, they talk, they touch each other, they stand, they exit through a doorway in the corner behind them from which comes a bright glowing light. They eat, they talk, they are still.

Exterior: (10.30-10.45 pm)
At dusk a pathway of cut wood leads to a flat grassy area backed with linden trees. Six 'spirit houses' stand supported by bamboo poles. Couples appear at different times from different directions. They stand near their 'houses'. They move towards each other, taking each other in a dance step, a lift, an embrace, striking each other, breaking away, back to stillness. One by one the 'spirit houses' are set on fire whilst couples dance, embrace, fight, argue, hate, care for each other. The couples disappear - the houses smoulder in the growing darkness.

2. COMMENT

From my point of view the workshop set out to do two things: to examine a) some processes of making performance (a live interactive event) and b) ways in which an audience's vision can be structured by performance. Some of the main approaches taken to try and achieve this were as follows:

To enable people to work with
- the details of what is there, the material to hand, rather than with abstractions, with already formed images
- the 'action' of doing something in performance circumstances rather than 'acting'
- the traces and images that such action generates
- attention to physical presence, to object and to site
- the possibility of 'magical operations' - that imaginal/physical actions can be causal but not necessarily logical in their effect, can begin to realise the 'unseen', the 'unspoken'
- compositional strategies that allows material to move towards form rather than be determined by structure
- an attention, a movement that goes from idea to action/from body to image
- the possibility of using creative means to re-enchant/re-claim the alienated realities that surround us

What is important is trying to make something together, a 'something' that in this instance might be called performance - that involves the creative efforts of a group of people in a particular time and place - that invokes something that cannot be totally predicted in advance - that in some sense or other is given its own life, a 'life' that can and does provide an imaginative and regenerative energy for people involved (as spectators/participants or performers); a 'life' that is not entirely divorced from larger cultural, social, political or environmental realities.

The first problem that such a workshop encounters is one of nomination - what is this work? Expectations ar set up by the word 'theatre' - a sense that we might know in advance what 'theatre' is, even what a

'theatre workshop' is, what kind of strategies, approaches it might employ, what kind of vocabulary, what range of references are going to be used, and already therefore, that we might be missing the moment of 'theatre', the moment of vision. It is difficult to generalise about these expectations. The workshop was not primarily concerned with skills associated with 'drama' - skills of acting, of 'restored behaviour', with the playing out of roles, the re-presentation of familiar narrative or image fragments determined by culturally conditioned views of what constitutes 'drama' or 'theatre'. The broader problems of making performance - what is it that we are doing, who is it for, how does an image take form - are never far from the surface.

The workshop was centrally concerned with the experience of moment, in what is happening as people come together physically, imaginatively, socially, as individuals or as groups, to do something, to make performance images together. The workshop 'described' above always resists description in the sense that much of its activity is happening as a live event, the thing itself, rather than a reflection about, a description of the thing. For example, asking a person to lift another person from the floor is an instruction that is easily grasped in the mind. As an action that engages you in the present problem of how it is done, or indeed what it might begin to mean for someone watching, it is something that requires a different set of 'understandings' to realise the instruction. Or for example, extending the image of 'home' out of yourself, into a collective, public space, also requires a shifted set of attentions. It is this different set of 'unterstandings' - this shift in attention, an ability to engage with what is in front of us, that is important.

The insistence on an attention to the 'dimension of the present moment' (as Miroslav Holub calls it) - at least as an approach to making performance - finds an expression in the way that materials as well as 'time' are used - salt, matal, fire etc. This is not a reductivist approach to 'things as they are', or a belief in some 'absolute' nature or quality, but rather a recognition that 'things as they are' (simple actions, materials) are already complex enough without the imposition or overlay of additional meanings. Octavio Paz, with reference to the work of Duchamp, describes the art work as a 'machine for producing meanings'. In trying to strip away assumptions, expectations, conditioned responses in order to arrive at the material itself, we hope to arrive at where the work begins; letting things speak for themselves, find their own life, and engage in the inherent emptying an filling of meaning.

Such a workshop can only bring performance material to a point of contact - things are put in relationship, images are starting to occur, to deepen, but the broader sense of (radical) coherence or 'living connections' is only hinted at. Thus any 'performance' will be pitched at this point of first recognition of material - essaying: trying things out to see how they/if they fit. The 'life' that begins to inhabit the reality that is formed between the intention of the performance maker(s) and the perception of the spectator(s) - what Marcel Duchamp refers to as the 'difference' that is the work itself- makes its first meanings here.

As a workshop leader the hardest aspect is balancing the individual desires and enthusiasms of paricipants (coming from all sorts of different experiences and backgrounds), with an element of direction. It is my belief that the best learning about performance an how it is made occurs in the moment of performance - and that to provide an experience of performance is valuable because of this; but that this approach (in such a time scale) will always involve a level of imposition of ideas from the leader.

I am grateful for the opportunity to work at the Scheersberg, not only to extend and broaden the range of my own work, but as an opportunity to see this work in relation to other approaches within an international perspective; to be able to learn from the cultural view point of others, both participants and leaders. Support for art work as a form of gift-giving, of imaginative exchange (particularly in 'live' media) is particularly important in a cultural atmosphere dominated by consumerism and materialist values. Art work provides us with a means of re-imagining and re-forming our individual and collective futures that can be freed from conventional expectations and values. The opportunities to engage as participants (rather than as consumers) in this type of work are increasingly few. Scheersberg provides an ideal setting and an administrative structure that enables creative work to happen in a relaxed and effective atmosphere. The work and the involvement of participants from many countries and many backgrounds does not only begin and end in the relative isolation and intensity of Scheersberg. It is precisely this concentration, this focus, which gives a 'life' to creative work, an energy that enables it to return to the cities, to disseminate itself into other, perhaps more demanding situations, to find appropriate forms for giving shape to the future.

„Art exists to help us to recover the sensation of life, to make the stone stony. the end of art is to give a sensation of the object as seen, not as recognised. The technique of art is to make things 'unfamiliar', to make forms obscure, so as to increase the difficulty and the duration of perception. The act of perception in art is an end in itself and must be prolonged. In art, it is our experience of the process of construction that counts, not the finished product. " (Viktor Schklovsky)