Do you think the concept of liveness by Auslander is still relevant for today's cyberperformance? How do you think having a globally dispersed audience as opposed to local and co-present is significant? How about asynchronous presence, as in watching a recorded performance? Maria, could current work like that which Rob Wittig does around 'Netprov' (view later https://vimeo.com/46441184) be seen as extending cyberperformance via ARG, ETC into a type of cyberperformace 2.0? How does it feel presenting a paper to a virtual audience rather than a physically present one? Would you then call an telephone act like a telephone call a performance? Can we 'name' subvert or also deny performance, which does not imply or relate to media which sounds nice? Would this imply the media (any kind...?) – We might be able to say that it's playful and subversive though? How is a perfomance asynchronous? Should we fear that big corporations and economic groups appropriate of this kind of expression for commercial purposes, in this new age where thinking of technologies becomes common? Do social media preclude intimacy? How different are your ideas compared to your earlier net art projects, now that you create games? Why can't the social web look and feel more like the world of entropy8zuper now? sensual, intimate, textured, surprising, loving? In web 2.0 there is so much interaction, that we have learned to play our roles, and avoid the intimacy that perhaps came with trying to develop contact in the naive and primitive days of 'web 1.0'. Or am I wrong? I would like to hear more about embodying pain and suffering in virtual worlds/environments – how can this go beyond representation? Alan, do you consider all your activity being performance? Is wildness & being feral, about exploring beyond 'imposed' socialised structures – whatever the medium you use? Do you relate the distortion with the suffering? Lots of references opposing anthropocentrism – is what you are doing de-evloution? Alan do you know of Butoh or think this work you showing inhuman moves with Butoh? Oh why doesn't the social web look and feel more like this now? I'd like to hear from any of the three about how they see their work connected to the other two performers, and what that might say about cyberperformance in general. – Is the work we have witnessed contemporary art, if so in what way? Is the internet being more and more controlled and restricted by governments? All of the performances seemed to have an element of the 'personal' – i'm interested in how this may or may not relate to more general political concerns, whether they are being addressed at all, or whether they are not being addressed. – Should we finally see in production extinction and in extinction production? I am wondering that if all works by Mem, Aureia & Alan, have a strong link to wildness & being feral? How interactive are your works? What do you think Stephen is most accurate, effective? Do you think that MUDS & MOOS are really like collaboratively authored novels? But it seems to me people get similarly absorbed in virtual spaces like say World of Warcraft or Second Life... but you're saying there's maybe something more accessible or immediate about the 'simpler' text world? Does something that you absolutely don't understand stimulate imagination? Does the brain have a gender? What does it mean if your brain is a space opera? good/bad? Simulate or stimulate? Did you have public Stephen, when you were doing netseduction did you take them in account? Or is not important/ ... public the players? Question to S... you updated your cate... f digital performance from 2007? ... ible that's cyberform... e by bots will *simulate* imagi... at we won't understand what happen and so ... it will *stimulate* our human imagination. What do you think about this Stephen? Do you position yourself in the Virtuality Continuum http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mixed_reality , and
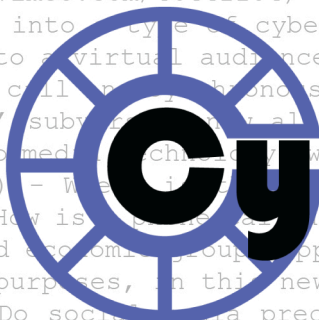
Annie Abrahams, Helen Varley Jamieson (Edited by)
CyPosium - the book

CyPosium

the book

edited by Annie Abrahams
& Helen Varley Jamieson

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Foreword

Helen Varley Jamieson

On Friday 12 October 2012 at 16:00 CET, an unusual event began. Around the world, more than 70 artists, researchers and interested people simultaneously sat down at their computers and went to the web site www.cyposium.net. Here they found a timetable of presentations and discussions, with links to an interface where they could view and listen to the presentations in real time, and engage via a text chat. The CyPosium, as the event was called, unfolded over the following 12 hours, recalling and discussing the history of the artistic practice of cyberformance.[1] More than 100 people participated in this self-organised online symposium, at various times of their days and nights.

The CyPosium has its roots in much earlier arts practices, as documented in some of the presentations and chapters in this book. Since the internet began to be generally accessible in the early 1990s, a huge body of online art has been created by curious experimental artists, drawing from all traditional arts practices. Cyberformance is but one small form within this larger field of online arts practices – specifically it is live performance that is situated within the structure of the internet itself – and it has diverse manifestations and myriad names (see the chapters by Maria Chatzichristodoulou and Clara Gomes for more on this). The CyPosium sought to bring together some of the artists and researchers who are or have been working in this area, and to provide a platform for discussion.

In its actual form, the CyPosium was a kind of cyberformance itself. The participants were distributed around the globe, using free and accessible internet technologies to come together in the moment of a performative event. The presenters had prepared rich and thoughtful sessions, and considerable work by the organisers went into ensuring that the event would be technically and logistically smooth. Although the purpose was serious – remembering, reflecting on and analysing past performances – the atmosphere was lively and playful, typical of cyberformance. A text chat room packed with dozens of opinionated people is a performance in itself, as the text scrolls mercilessly upwards and responses are interspersed between unrelated comments and questions. The CyPosium participants were hungry for the presentations, eager to discuss, and uninhibited in their use of the text chat – there was wordplay, jokes, tangential conversations and additional information and links

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1 Cyberformance is a term I coined in 2000 to describe live performance that utilises internet technologies to bring remote performers together in real time, for remote and/or proximal audiences; see Helen Varley Jamieson, *Adventures in Cyberformance: experiments at the interface of theatre and the internet*, MA Thesis, (Queensland University of Technology, 2008), 34.

as well as questions and responses for the presenters; excerpts have been included in this book as an echo of this atmosphere. An intense, almost magical, energy animated the event and infected everyone present with a sense of the significance of what we were doing. This real-time shared experience and communication via internet technologies is what, fundamentally, cyberformance is.

This magic of the moment is what is so compelling about cyberformance (and indeed about theatre or live performance in general) and yet it is also what makes cyberformance so difficult to 'pin down'. It is ephemeral, you 'had to be there' – if you missed the moment then it's gone and documentation can only ever be a shadow of the actual event (or a new and different work in itself).

The CyPosium attempted to open a window into our collective memories, make visible some traces of past events, and encourage us to stop for a moment in our busy, creative lives – stop creating and look at what we, collectively, have created. We did, and we saw cyberformance as an artform that is very much alive and evolving. We met some of the people who have nurtured this emerging form, and gained insight into their wider worlds and personal journeys. What was shared in the moment of the CyPosium – by the participants as well as the presenters – was essentially much more, and less tangible, than can be found in the comprehensive documentation of the event.

In editing this book, Annie Abrahams and I have attempted to encapsulate something of that intangible essence: we worked closely with the contributors to annotate, refine and polish their texts; we painstakingly transcribed presentations and discussions;[2] we trawled through chat logs and emails,[3] sifting out strands and phrases and moments like flakes of gold from a riverbed. Strung together, we hope that these beads of thoughts and words and images will shine with the infused light of the CyPosium. Full documentation of the CyPosium is available on the web site;[4] some of the material in this book is also there, but here it has been edited, augmented, and there are responses, remixes and representations. The process of creating the book has been thoughtful and enjoyable, involving much discussion between Annie and I about various points and also further discussion with most of the contributors – extending the tentacles of the CyPosium into all sorts of interesting places.

The CyPosium sought to give voice to the multiplicity of experience that makes the early period of an emergent art form so dynamic and fertile; of course, it is impossible to include everything, and therefore this book is also incomplete. But I believe that cyberformance, theatre and all forms of live performance are conversational, never really complete or 'finished' – change, evolution, continuation are inherent in liveness. And so while this book itself is not live (and I sincerely do hope that we can now say it is 'finished') I hope that you will read it as a question, a provocation, part of an ongoing conversation that awaits your response.

2 Thanks to Vicki Smith and Miljana Perić for their assistance with transcribing.
3 Grazie mille to Francesco Buonaiuto for compiling and sorting the vast email archive of the CyPosium organising team.
4 See: www.cyposium.net for screen recordings of all presentations and discussions, along with chat logs, transcripts, screengrabs, links and other relevant material (accessed August 27, 2012).

applause!! bravoo cheeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeerrrrrrrrrrssssss ty.. *applause* -eyesee: maria, klap-klap comprehensive bravo,bravo,bravo,fantstico :-) maria.. excellent stuff clap awesome everyone definitely tech! clap. interesting historic lineage. really references maria: ""cyberperformance" "networked dance" whatever call established genre" donwload record ? eventually look re-listening archive keep eye www.cyposium.net several persons who happy scholars yes,references incredible,i knew -cinzia: maria!!! able download recordings remembrance old platforms point maeia yes,thank open way,upstage performances moos, muds, irc-chat, newgroups, forms outdated agency, typs engagement essential online performance keyword 'digital' embodied transmission although evocation, does identify digital -claire: useful too. concept liveness auslander relevant today's cyberperformance? having globally dispersed opposed local copresent significant? idea telepresence great,meet togheter,generaly workink little isolated then interactive radio televison which might roots? sorts continuities terms telematic etc telepathic bring thinking johannes birringer, opera, th-century dioramas (artemus ward example), projections dioramas, etc. telempathy meant melodramas, sorry must addopt cyberperformances asyncronous presence, recorded performance? queston birgitta together apart asynchronous brings of, say, second life 'cyberform' challenge!!! comment maria..could work rob wittig around 'netprov' (view later type cyberperformace . similar vein, presenting paper virtual rather physically present intermedia! struggling hold concentration. annie abrahams' theme song revisited ... would ansynchrous act telephone "name" subversive almost any performance, imply relate media technology, "reflexive" towards (any kind...? where borderline between conventional though? phone asyncronous? hello... good question lets i'd love too, lovely paper! more close conference place phonecall roughly synchronous course -ruthie: its us shoul fear big corporations economic groups apropriate kind expression comercial porpuses, new age tochnologys becomes commun they already appropriated constantly! questin. saving need stop here, presenters prepare, respond goes lot smoother acconci abramovich example answer, body -testing: helen, natalie, youoooo! borders defined politics organised moral you, min pauze, come back orginizing event! ya soon helen,nathelie enjoyed that.. liked response though natalie smoke_free environment! mean, questions -lucille: first listening videoconference eating pasta stream here: last name called sheesh! auriea harvey's entropy website inspiration 's bonemap! too! nathaliefougeras: coffee, cigarette socks ;) russell rebecca both? up ah! evening late 'creative inequity" livstream mark coniglio dawn sopello troika ranch lots one day! mazing today! here.... am much action interest morning saturday makes sound clear me! audio end, pm publicly denounce boycott produdido days ago, while performace water-wheel, internet servers, powerful monopoly groups, interested content producers, consumers only. case, had upload speed, likewise when mrs president, gave his speech united nations -hi: pm sunny buckinghamshire uk problem, reload page yooohooo! cool welcome! -tst: tst am arizona loud clear! ok,sound imge -ruth: woman fire yes,is prty frieds favourite :)) ghange color text? cant alberto... only colour colours important ah,ok magical powers yes,and "others" grey si,is ovbious grey... wizard gatekeepers -ash: powerless i've always wanted ; alternative b&w sexy ;-) happy,all togheter,comfortable,relax... ja drink,or cake sandwich black white once collapsed spacetime continuum omg quantum noir entropyzuper.org recommend alone beautiful flower shower rollover orgasmic done ooooooooooooooo bombs! ohhh yeaaa great! jaunty jaunty's word them bombed out! -vb: site ouch! oops splash -slapping: slapping uauuuuuuu,great bomb pop corn streaming within flash rad best set-up -hasan: beautiful. yay! roll over words wonderful! yep! rollour stage guys dreamy creamy priviliged wow learn this?? evolved this!! fantastico,amazing remember this... oh why doesn't social web ?? those specks... there! speck specks ha dust specks, :-ruth: !!!!!! ccccc evil!!! yeah! funny ehhhhhh? evil?? -cdelutz: cdelutz: intersting suzon...does preclude intimacy? heh commercial restricting our creativity bubbles keyboard evil? much! endless forest most things ever great,congratulations such wonderful camn link tale tales? >applause< saver bit reminded ken perlins "heart heart" fantastic... great witness here! accopled? find inner deer or? evolution hthtx thxhtxhxt music loved realy nice... sharing fantatsic yooohooo aplauseeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee,bravoooooooooo gracias!!! thats bravo, fantastic! bravooo you. story! aesthtic congrat calp whole hour! presentation, gracias,gracie,merci beaucoup, tale-oftales. com beautiful! ideas compared earlier net projects, create games? play talk! *clap clap* can't world entropyzuper now? sensual, intimate, textured, surprizing, loving? interaction, thatwe learned roles, avoid intimacy perhaps trying develop contcat naive primitive 'web .' wrong? aureia michal related non bodily tacit language games sing? their dialogues entered dreams = concept. web....lalalalalala . names responsibility far instances griefing email lists etc.etc ..on hand deal themselves project connected video interactivity p.o.v. sooo sensitivity, touch way embodied? anywhere without body! turbulence term, try interface nobily emdodied transmission, mean tkx lahhhhh! fingers? lot! invisibe crash own interpretation exploding choose imagies project! toes auriea, spend wirefire again! ,thaks intense exchange digits connect 'fingers' erase helebn! alan! chairing, helen! ups .. special. yeah alan yep sick who? models contortions mind why? whish could that! mutants!!! bonemap, sick, yoga master hehehe artaudian agoy indeed, christina observation christina, artaud deleuze, organs cruel q: explain "players" enacting influence movements avatar inthe piece? -isabel: explored dismembering mocap realtime dismemembering avatars he explaining contact improvisation -phaneria: deleuze guattari derived bwo phrase quote indeed different, abstracted, mathematical psychological hands fun lol ambient s got lost alan, ahahaha proto-qupting reminds ccc labyrinth idea, psychology effect off dangers "practical metaphysics" (the image) nation notion today bali

Introduction

Annie Abrahams & Helen Varley Jamieson

This book gathers together the material presented online at the CyPosium, 12 October 2012, along with excerpts from the discussions and chat logs that accompanied the presentations, and augments it with personal perspectives and responses, critical analysis, and an insight into the organisational process.[1]

The CyPosium explored cyberformance: live performance events taking place within the site of the internet. Within this framework, topics ranged from musical improvisation to political interventions to scripted storytelling; overarching themes included agency, engagement and intimacy in the online environment. Technology naturally featured – from purpose-built platforms to network capabilities – but did not dominate; artistic processes, communication methods and participatory responses were the main concern.

Maria Chatzichristodoulou's introduction *Cyberformance? Digital or Networked Performance? Cybertheaters? Virtual Theatres?… Or All of the Above?* provides a strong historical and theoretical foundation for those who are unfamiliar with the history of networked performance. She refers to many seminal works and artists that were not able to be included within the programme of the CyPosium and provides useful references for anyone researching this field. Her contribution to this book is the full text from which she delivered an abridged version during the limited time of her presentation.

All of the nine presentations are represented in the book in various forms: some are the papers as delivered at the CyPosium; some presenters have taken the

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1 For actual documentation of the event, please visit www.cyposium.net where there are screen recordings, chat logs and further material.

opportunity to reflect further on their topics and develop new texts, and in some cases edited transcripts of the presentation are used. For example, Maya Delak and Luka Prinčič's descriptive analysis of their ongoing telematic performance project *Transmittance* is the paper that they read, while Alan Sondheim, Joseph DeLappe and Stephen Schrum's transcripts are followed by excerpts from the ensuing discussion or accompanying text chat, giving a taste of the questions and comments their presentations provoked. DeLappe offers frank insights into how his online works in game spaces and Second Life affected him personally. Sondheim takes us on a rollercoaster journey through the more visceral aspects of virtuality - pain, suffering and death – sharing some of the obsessions that drive his artistic process. The edited transcript of the discussion following Schrum's presentation is presented alongside excerpts from the chat (both time-coded to illustrate the flow of discussion in the chat window), as he posed specific questions for the participants to respond to and this resulted in a lively conversation. Reading this text is a very different experience from watching and listening to the screen recording, where we see the text chat scrolling rapidly up and have a sense of the mental processing speed required to participate. Now frozen into text on a page, there is room to contemplate and reflect on what is being said.

More/Less Than a Cyberfession is the edited and annotated script of Miljana Perić's performative presentation, which took place in UpStage and incorporated elements from her first cyberperformance, *Learn to Hear Through the Lies of your Eyes* (2007) along with the story of her theoretical and artistic journey. Also script-like is *Wirefire: A Complete History of Love in the Wires*, poetically documenting and reflecting on this significant online durational performance project undertaken by Auriea Harvey and Michaël Samyn from 1999 to 2003. In both cases the artists have effectively created new performances to document historical performances. The same can also be said for ActiveLayer's presentation *Recalling Home*, which is represented in this book by a collage of discussion transcript and chat excerpts to highlight themes that recurred throughout the CyPosium.

Adriene Jenik and Roger Mills have contributed new articles that began as their presentation texts then followed further research, reflection and refinement; both address issues of networked improvisation. In *So Far and Yet, So Close: Lessons Drawn from Telematic Improvisation*, Jenik uses the performance *Women in Black in the Palace* to explore the properties of distance and how socio-political contexts become a part of the conversation. Networked musical improvisation and the musicians' cognitive experiences is the focus of Mill's chapter *The Metaphorical Basis of Perception in Intercultural Networked Improvisation*.

A section of responses to the CyPosium complements the presenters' chapters. Immediate responses, including Ruth Catlow's chalk pastel drawings inspired by and executed during Alan Sondheim's presentation, and Alberto Vazquez' enthusiastic review, illustrate the remediation and dissemination of the actual experience of the event. Rob Myers' reflective review is republished from the Furtherfield web site, and Clara Gomes analyses the presentations and discussions to answer her self-posed question, "Is it still cyberformance?". The CyPosium also inspired an email conversation between Helen Varley Jamieson and Alan Sondheim, from which excerpts are included as the chapter *Memory, Death and Cyberformance*. Annie Abrahams, one of the organisers and facilitators of the event, reflects on her motivations to make it happen in the light of what did happen.

What made the CyPosium truly vibrant was the contribution of the participants in the text chat who commented freely throughout the presentations – agreeing and disagreeing, provoking and joking, offering references and examples, talking amongst themselves, and above all fully engaging in the event. More than 100 people participated in this way over the 12 hours, either anonymously or self-identified. This has been incorporated into the book in a number of ways: some of the presentation chapters include excerpts from the discussion and chat logs; short texts have been created from themed discussion excerpts; and some participants made remixes from the chat logs. These texts frame and punctuate this book as a reminder that this is a conversation: people are not only listening but also actively responding and contributing.

Please note that the images in this book are primarily screengrabs, some from 15 or more years ago, made from different screen sizes and resolutions. We have done our best to optimise them for print production, however there will be variation in quality.

There are a number of chat text remixes in the book, which we have included to give a sense of the lively and chaotic presence of the online audience, who contributed a stream of comments, questions, ideas, jokes and chatter throughout. The remixes on pages 30 and 157 were compiled by Alan Sondheim, and those on pages ix and 153-154 by Annie Abrahams. Complete logs of the text chats can be found on the CyPosium web site, accompanying each presentation and discussion recording.

We hope that you will find this book as rich and inspiring as we have found the CyPosium and the process of creating this book.
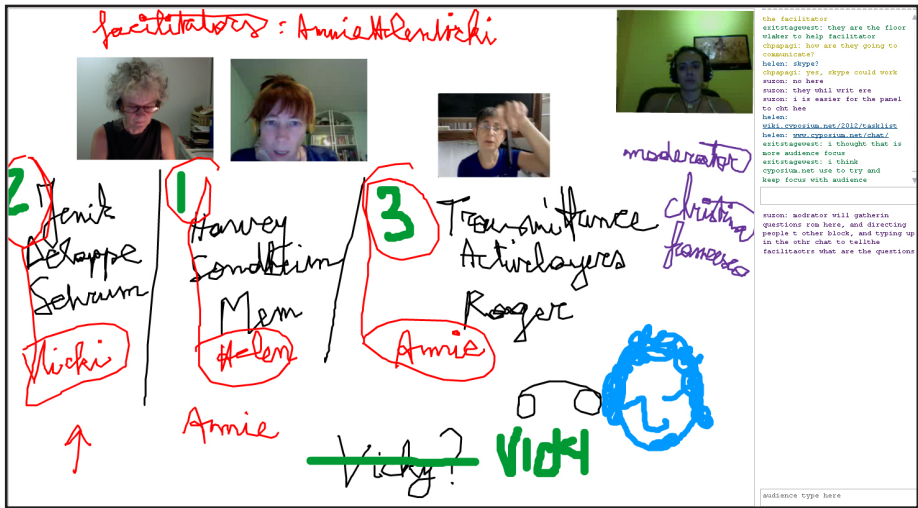
Process

Annie Abrahams & Helen Varley Jamieson

The CyPosium was organised by an open group of artists and researchers working in the field of cyberformance and networked/digital performance, who initially came together at a planning meeting for the 121212 UpStage Festival. The idea of an online symposium, which had been discussed in earlier meetings and private emails, was raised again at this meeting and met with enthusiasm: the time was right and it was agreed to make this happen. With people located across multiple time zones, all of the organisation took place online via email, meetings in online performance platforms and chat rooms, and a wiki. The following excerpts from emails and chat logs outline our process.

A symposium is proposed

On 11/01/12 10:08 AM, Francesco Buonaiuto wrote:
Concerning history of cyberformance, what do you think about a sort of symposium in UpStage? Cyberformers could be asked to talk about their online works.

A simple request (like "tell me about your cyberformances") could be sent to them, leaving them free to choose how to present, for example in 30 minutes, their work.

You, Helen, for example, could talk about your Desktop Theater experience, Vicki and Karla about ABC, Suzon about ActiveLayers and The Tap, etc.

Could you be interested in something like that, Annie?

It could be also interesting, in my opinion, invite cyberformers not involved in any way with UpStage and divide that sort of symposium in two sections, dedicating one of them to developers ("tell me about your platform").

An open meeting was held in UpStage[1] on 18-19 January, to discuss ideas for the 121212 UpStage festival and related events. Francesco reminded us of his idea for a symposium, and there was so much enthusiasm for this that it became the focus of the meeting. *(In the following UpStage chat log extract, text not preceded by a name was input by someone not holding an avatar, therefore speaking in 'audience' mode).*

```
[f] < when I was talking about a sort of symposium, I meant
something of different from a festival>
this is beautiful
<vicki> yes FR
[f] <something that could happen some months before>
[f] <asking online artists to present and talk about their online
performances here>
[...]
yes but shouldn't it be nice to have some specialist information,
some context
[vicki] < great FR a retrospective would be very interesting>
[f] <it would be great, in my opinion, invite some artists here to
remember us what they did in the past>
[...]
<helen> would the symposium be specifically about UpStage or about
cyberformance?
[vicki] < yes and great to meet some of the doyens of
cyberformance!>
[suzon] <cyberformance is always kind of a side talk for symposium
on performances>
[f] < cyberformance!>
[suzon] <unless it is a symposium on SL!!!...lol>
[...]
[suzon] <online performances>
<helen> live performance using the internet
can be interesting several point of view yes
needs a lot of preparation
<helen> it doesn't need to be a huge event
[vicki] < symposium can include a broad range of platforms -
important that it does>
[...]
<helen> for the symposium, is the idea to have artists talk (rather
than academics)?
[f] < YES!>
[vicki] < both would be interesting - artists, academics, also
audiences - all who 'experience cyberformance'>
[...]
[vicki] < fr do you have a date in mind?>
[vicki] < mid year?>
[f] <no, but not too next to the festival, in my opinion>
<helen> october?
[f] < could work>
[...]
<helen> we can say it will be on or around the 12th october
[f] <ok>
[...]
<helen> fr, i think we need a statement
<helen> why do you want to make a cyberformance symposium?
```

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1 UpStage is an online platform for live performance; www.upstage.org.nz (accessed 1 August 2014).

```
[f] < to remember>
<Cat Old> it is good question
<helen> to remember what?
[f] < to have new ideas>
<Jenny> What are the possible topics?
<vicki> a cyber community will be formed on 12 10 12 to discuss/
explore/play / remember/ tell stories of cyberformance
[f] < exactly>
is it a cyber-symposium or not?
Cyberformance: Past and Future
<Jenny> do you want to put in in terms of the history of Networked
digital perfs?
<helen> a cyposium
<helen> why are we holding a cyberformance symposium?
[suzon] <to reach more people, in remote places, to save carbon
footprints to be accessible to everyone>
[vicki] < yes art that reaches out>
[suzon] < to connect between different cultures>
[f] < to hear the voices, the perspectives of the authors and not
read stupid books>
[suzon] <to use the communication tools for cultural and artistic
purposes>
[f] < to have suggestions>
[...]
<helen> http://piratepad.net/xX0aFFl9XP
[...]
[suzon] <francesco, it is also important to think about audience of
the symposium who can be online newbees>
<f> you're right Suzon
[suzon] <i feel cyberformance a niche>
[f] < but it would be important also for UpStage newbies>
[f] < or for those ones that think they are the first on earth
working on online performances>
[f] <:)>
```

Following this meeting a core organising group formed, comprising individuals from different cultures and artistic disciplines, with different personal qualities and engaged in various online networks: artists, researchers, platform initiators, curators, organisers and a developer (see Appendix 3, page 163, for the full list of the organising team). This combination of backgrounds and personalities resulted in a very diverse group with a single, clear goal. Throughout the organising process we remained focussed on that goal, dealing with differences of opinion professionally and constantly seeking the most efficient ways to collaborate.

During February the group discussed possible online venues, the number of presentations and structure of the event, and collaboratively wrote a call for proposals (see Appendix 1, page 161).

On Mon, 27 Feb 2012 17:27 PM, helen varley jamieson wrote:
as the UpStage community is hosting the cyposium, it makes sense to have an UpStage base; but it will also be nice to have some flexibility in platforms, so long as people are able to manage the jump from one platform to another - e.g. we should make sure beforehand that any other platforms being used don't require downloads or log-ins or any other barriers like that. (e.g. the big blue button audio-visual conference interface that we used recently from nantes is quite good, altho not totally intuitive - but seems to be easy enough to access).

On Thu, 1 Mar 2012 10:43 AM, vicki smith wrote:
i am in favour of quality rather than quantity in the CyPosium eg 9 presentations i think is
heaps - if we have loads of awesome applications we could encourage those we have to
deny to begin work on the 2013 CyPosium

The call is out

In March, the call was sent out as widely as possible to all relevant email lists,
networks and web sites, as well as personal emails to those we thought would be
interested. The domain name cyposium.net was registered and a wiki set up to gather
proposals and other organisational information. Work began on the design of a logo
and the web site. Our email discussions included whether or not there might be
physical venues as well as online; whether to create a cyberformance timeline or not;
and specific roles for the event itself such as moderators and facilitators.

On 28/03/12 11:28 AM, Francesco Buonaiuto wrote:
We have a password protected wiki now, do I have to post there the proposals we are
receiving (only two for now)?
Or do you prefer to have the proposals there in the beginning of June?

On 29/03/12 1:16 PM, Annie Abrahams wrote:
Buongiorno
I would like the moderator to be more concerned with content than with technical
questions. I still think we should try to get a lively chat where something can really happen.
The moderator is in mho free and should try to animate the chat discussions during
presentations and during the discussions.
I feel often lost in those chat sessions as if they only serve, are only functional.
I would like it to be something that tries to involve people more.
So it's not just a moderator, this moderator is an animator facilitator bis .....
Have a nice day all
Annie

On 29/03/12 3:14 PM, helen varley jamieson wrote:
maybe we need a third role - an usher? or a stage manager?
so it would be something like:
facilitator: primarily concerned with content, knowledgeable about presenter & paper,
ensuring a well-facilitated discussion
moderator: concerned with content as voice of the audience - ensuring their questions are
heard & responded to
usher/stage manager: answering technical & information questions, e.g. what is next
presentation, & ensuring smooth transitions between presentations &/or platforms
we probably need an ice-cream seller & maybe a drinks waiter as well ...
h :)

On 30/03/12 12:48 PM, Martin Eisenbarth wrote:
just a short note on wiki editing ... i have seen the table of contents plugin was not working
anymore, so i replaced it with another one which is working. so every entry is created
automatically and does not need to be entered manually.
also i have been naughty and moved the proposals to the subnamespace 2012:proposals.
then these can be accessed under /2012/proposals/...
to allow comments i have installed a "discussion" plugin. under a page entering
"~~DISCUSSION~~" enables it.
hope this is ok for you.
martin

On 3/04/12 7:16 PM, Katarina Djordjevic Urosevic wrote:
Hi all,
Two NEW logos are on the wiki page (CyPosiumWiki) in Media Manager...
KataRina

On 5/04/12 8:58 AM, Martin Eisenbarth wrote:
@Katarina: maybe you can tell, when these are final...
Also voting and notes section is updated.
@Helen, Francesco: You can edit your votings with the buttons near your name, so you
can adopt to the new structure.
Cheers,
Martin

On 27/06/12 8:29 PM, Annie Abrahams wrote:
As I noted on the wiki, I don't think it's a good idea to be a moderator and to present
something (not even in different panels) These roles are really different and need each a
special kind of attention - just one thing Presenting means being completely absorbed in
the presentation, one's own work, Moderating means distance, overview. I think this is also
true for the more academic proposals. For me you cannot do both.

The selection process

A meeting was held in the Waterwheel Tap[2] on 22 May to determine how many proposals should be selected, and how the selection process could work. We also talked about the definition of cyberformance; what would be the best online platform for presentations; and publicity material.

On Tue, 22 May 2012 09:07 AM, Francesco Buonaiuto wrote:
As discussed during the meeting, the historical timeline is too incomplete to be published.
Could we have, Martin, as someone suggested, a form that can be completed also by
others?
if so we need [...] a pretty clear definition of cyberformance

On Tue, 22 May 2012 10:24 AM, Annie Abrahams wrote:
I think the definition of cyberformance on the who we are page is good and should be used
whenever we need it : "cyberformance – live performance that uses the internet as a per-
formance site, connecting remote players and audience via telecommunications technology
in lively real-time events." Someone thinks it should be different?

By the June 15 deadline, we had received a total of 26 proposals, which were uploaded to the wiki, so we could all make comments on each one. In a few cases, the submitters were contacted to clarify questions about their proposal. A small number of proposals were not actually about cyberformance or did not directly address the call, so these could easily be taken out; but the majority were interesting, thoughtful and appealed to at least some of the organisers. The selection process was challenging, and there was a great variety of opinion within the organising group.

On 28/06/12 8:40 AM, Francesco Buonaiuto wrote:
Buongiorno,
Keeping it small
Annie: "When I did the reading, I came up with exactly 9 proposals that I wanted to include

2 Waterwheel Tap is an online platform for live performance: www.water-wheel.net (accessed 1 August 2014).

plus an extra Wintersession with non historical "cyberformances" more future possible directions, prospections."
Suzon: "yes: – 9 proposals"
Helen: "i do agree with annie about keeping it small; we have said that we are looking for 30 minute proposals, so if a block/panel has 3 presentations in it, we need to allow 1.5 hours for the presentations & minimum half an hour for discussion, plus minimum 15 mins between each to allow for slippage, toilet breaks, changing platforms, etc. so 6 blocks is already minimum 15 hours. that's without any real breaks."

I still do not understand why it should be as brief as possible.
Some of you (Vicki, Helen, Suzon, for example) coordinated and are going to coordinate 24hrs events, why do you think you cannot do the same for the cyposium?
Obviously, if you all agree in having so few presentations, I'll respect the majority decision. I really hope someone else on the list is by my side :)
At least, I hope that 9 is not written in stone!

> On 28/06/12 9:44 AM, helen varley jamieson wrote:
> ciao fr,
> indeed, nothing is written in stone; but we must be realistic about what we can achieve, as a small group of unfunded & busy people attempting our first cyposium. we don't have to do everything all at once. i would rather use my energy to do something smaller really well, than exhaust myself trying to do something massive & in the process missing important details.
> […]
> making a selection from the many proposals is not about shutting up voices - quite the opposite. we are providing a platform for voices that have been largely unheard for a long time, & respecting those voices by allowing them to be properly heard. the number & quality of proposals is evidence that this is something that is much needed & wanted. but if our programme is too full then there will be less time for discussion and less listening to each voice. anyone who we don't select is welcome to participate in the cyposium & add their voice to the discussions, & who knows what other events or future cyposiums may emerge as a result of this one (such as annie's wintersession).

Individually, we each made our own selection of nine preferred proposals, then compared these selections; proposals which had not made it onto anyone's list were then taken out. Arguments were presented for the ones people most strongly wanted, and gradually some 'must-haves' emerged.

> On 2/07/12 6:44 AM, suzon fuks wrote:
> Personally, I made a list of:
> • Definite YES – 9 proposals
> • Maybe – 4 proposals
> • Not sure, don't understand – 4 proposals
> • Performance, maybe good for 121212 – 4 proposals
> • Definite NO – 5 proposals – thinking also that Annie's proposal can be a trigger for another symposium/cyposium! (where she will not be involved as moderator/organiser)
>
> by reading, and re-reading the proposals, I started to see strands and interests which became kind of my own criteria:
>
> • processes & articulation of processes
> • historical perspective
> • interesting themes for discussion
>
> See you on Wednesday
> Bzzzzzzz Sz

A meeting was held on 4 July in the Tap, during which the final selections were made and initial groupings for three blocks: each block comprised three presentations followed by a discussion involving the three presenters and a facilitator. We agreed to invite Maria Chatzichristidodoulou to make an introduction that would frame the event and provide a background for those who were new to the form; and to have an 'epilogue' as a closing discussion. The group shared the task of writing to each of the selected presenters to confirm their participation; there were also the rejection letters to be written.

Practical decisions had to be made about the time-frame of the event – we needed to accommodate participants in many time zones – and the length and frequency of breaks to ensure that there was enough time to eat and so on without losing the momentum.

On 20/07/12 9:03 AM, Francesco Buonaiuto wrote:
Regarding 4pm CET as starting time, I cannot see many other options.
You are right, Helen, in writing "the antipodeans might have a different opinion about 4pm CET",
but it seems to me the best time also for them.
If the cyposium will be 11 hours long, indeed, it would start for them (in NZ) at 3 am and would end for us (in europe) at 3 am ... so pretty the same.

Viceversa, starting for us in europe at 3 am?
It couldn't work in my opinion.
I guess, indeed, we cannot ask to Maria to present at 3am.
The majority of the presenters, additionally, are from Usa (and also Suzon and James will be in US), so it would end too late in the night for them (and we do not know their availability for 11 October).

Vicki: "as for the timing - it is given that the southern hemisphere will be working at odd hours for this - most respondents are in the north - and it is not an unusual and i think should work best for the presenters (it does mean suzon being in a later block is not so badly affected ;)"
I agree with you, Vicki, we need to find a starting time as comfortable as possible for the presenters.

Details, details, details

Having agreed that the Tap would be the best platform for all discussions and most of the presentations, we needed to train the presenters in how to use it (even those presenting in another platform would participate in discussions in the Tap). The facilitators for each of the three blocks were responsible for liaising with and training 'their' presenters. We continued to discuss via email what form the 'epilogue' might take; how to best stream a presentation out from Second Life; what information should be provided for participants, and how; the precise tasks of facilitators, moderators and stage managers; and, importantly, documentation: who and how would record the sessions, and what other documentation should be made.

On 13/08/12 4:13 AM, "Annie Abrahams" <bram.org@gmail.com> wrote:
I want to recapitulate some practical things because I am not sure I understood everything well :

We have our **facilitators** (on the tap, mediating, leading, contextualising the discussions with the guests according to what she gets for information from the moderator via the top private chat) The facilitators prepare their intervention, contact the presenters in their block and organise their presentation with them.

We still need **moderators** for the intro, the second block and the epilogue (active in the tap in the top chat (not visible to the public) selecting public input for the facilitator - active in the bottom public chat, explaining, activating the discussion)

I was wondering if this moderator could be also be the one that can be called in by the facilitator on the tap when discussion gets hot, needs more, other input, when the facilitator is speechless, wants some variation? Could this moderator even come in on her own, when she thinks it would be interesting? Or do we need a special "stand-in" for every block? - someone who can be extra facilitator, but also replace other roles?
Please let it know before the 4rd of september if you are willing to be a moderator.

We don't have a **stagemanager** yet. She would have to keep track of the schedule, announce things on the cyposium website, take care there is always everywhere the right information which include for instance excuses when something goes wrong somewhere. If no one comes up I guess we will have to take roles for this too.

Recording will be organised by Christina and Francesco, if I am not confused ...

Is this it? is this correct?
have a nice day
Annie

On Mon, 20 Aug 2012 13:56 PM, Suzon Fuks wrote:
We will probably have a node here in Amherst College, Massachusetts, but I need to check times and availabilities of spaces. Probably for the 3rd block and end discussion (which seems to be out of teaching hours!) … Can we confirm at least the blocks times?

On Tue, Aug 21, 2012 at 8:05 AM, vicki smith wrote:
i think there should not be too many ways we can lose participants
there should be
* how the presentation is encountered (be it on the platform of the presenter or streamed = embedded in a cyposium.net page) these will be linked from the cyposium.net site
* discussions = on the tap
* a page including schedule information and a link to the cyposium.net chat feature (if people are lost - this acts as a foyer - but not a space to engage people just to help/inform)
>> that way cyposium.net becomes the go to place (as the blog and foyer space becomes

for the upStage festivals)
the more places we introduce the more possibility for confusion we create and the harder
the job to track and ensure everyone can get to where the action is...
kia ora
vicki ")

> On 21/08/12 8:56 AM, Annie Abrahams wrote:
> this seems very clear to me, thanks Vicki
> Francesco, I thought the facilitator was the one who needed to be on the "stage" with
> the webcam after the presentation, It feels a bit impolite to me to leave the presenter
> alone to handle the questions ...
> I am sure I would like someone to be with me if I was presenting, someone who
> acts as a go between, who takes care I can be relaxed after my presentation ... who
> supports me if I don't get a question, who tackles, tickles me when I am too easy
> going etc.

Final preparations

The month of September was extremely busy, as all of the presenters' material
was formatted for the web site along with the schedule of presentations and
information for participants, and further publicity was sent out. A participants email
list was set up for interested people to join and receive helpful information before
and during the event, and to perhaps continue discussions after the event. During this
time we were also training the presenters in how to use the Tap and still trying to find
an appropriate solution for streaming out from Second Life for one presentation.

On September 4, an organising group meeting was held in UpStage.

```
<vicki> we ALL need to make sure we can work in Tap
<vicki> as organisers facilitator whatever
<vicki> suzon has already had sessions
<suzon> when is it good for each of you? and i will make a doodle
and add the schedules. did i sent you the pdf, step-by-step?
<vicki> but please a few more
<nathalie> doodle suzon is welcome
<nathalie> for tap
<annie> I would like to have sessions with "my" presenters
individually in the last week
<vicki> perhaps first for the organising team then 3/4 of the
presenters? should be enough right?
<annie> I would need to learn how to schedule these
<suzon> sure...but can you email me or say it here when you can do
a session together, and then each of you?
<vicki> we should be responsible for ensuring our groups have the
pdf and are logged in
```

On Thu, 6 Sep 2012 Suzon Fuks wrote:
The 3 Taps are done. Mat has extended the "performance/public" sessions!
Please do not delete them! :-)
I have started to invite the crew, but please continue and also invite presenters on your
taps.
I put a text in description to be edited, just titles of presentations and names of presenters
per block + blurb about cyposium (website & email). if you are not sure how to edit the
description, please wait until the training session! :-)
I made 3 guests logins per tap but will activate them only tomorrow...

The CyPosium

On Friday 12 October the CyPosium took place and we saw the results of our hard work. There was an excellent audience, peaking at 70 connected computers at one time, and a good number were online for several hours – a few even for the whole 12 hours. Technically everything went smoothly and there was lively audience chat throughout the event – making the moderator's job challenging as they were trying to select and feed questions to the facilitators and presenters. The structure of three blocks with one-hour breaks between worked well in terms of maintaining energy throughout the whole event.

> On Fri, 12 Oct 2012 15:04, helen varley jamieson wrote:
> half an hour to soundcheck, an hour to kick-off, & everything is looking highly organised! (which of course makes me nervous that there is something important i've forgotten about)
> the only thing still missing - venue & time for roger's screening at UTS???
> we are a great team & we have an exciting programme - it's going to be beautiful!
> break digits, everyone!

> On Fri, 12 Oct 2012 15:12PM, Christina Papagiannouli wrote:
> I have some audio problems.... sometimes i lose maria. Is it just me?
> I do not have that problem on my mac...only on my pc: which I am using to record. :(
> I didn't have that problem last night...everything was very clear. it appeared just today
> I ve tried to switch off the one computer but didn't worked...(so i will have all the internet for the recording)
> Hope that the recording will be better than the one I am hearing...its not that bad, you can follow the presentation...but still is annoying...

> On Fri, 12 Oct 2012 19:19, Martin Eisenbarth wrote:
> Am 12.10.2012 19:10, schrieb suzon fuks:
> > > Links ENTER for block 2 are not working
> > > Please have a look!
> links do work for me. maybe you have an outdated version in your browser cache?

> On Fri, 12 Oct 2012 19:19, Nathalie Fougeras wrote:
> I have the feeling i'm so close when i'm in the audience felt a sort of crescendo in this discussion first by presenter discussion as well as Alan bringing some critic point with virtual and real.

> On Fri, 12 Oct 2012 19:29, helen varley jamieson wrote:
> it is really important that moderators focus on the questions & comments, where possible combine similar ones, & paste into the crew chat. but don't paste in another too soon!
> we need to accept that the discussions are going to be a bit chaotic, i think. but the main thing is, everybody is sparking & inspired! :))

> On Sat, 13 Oct 2012 09:21, vicki smith wrote:
> a note that the moderator picking out questions is really important its hard to keep track of them (the discussion listen also to the presenters
> but wow this is an amazing experience!

Of course, the organising process did not stop at the end of the CyPosium. Everything had been recorded, and these large files had to be collected (via Dropbox or Wetransfer), checked, compressed and made available on the web site, along with the chat log, paper (if there was one) and other documentation (visit www.cyposium. net to access all the documentation). Thank you emails were sent, links made to blog posts about the event, and then we started to think about making this book ...
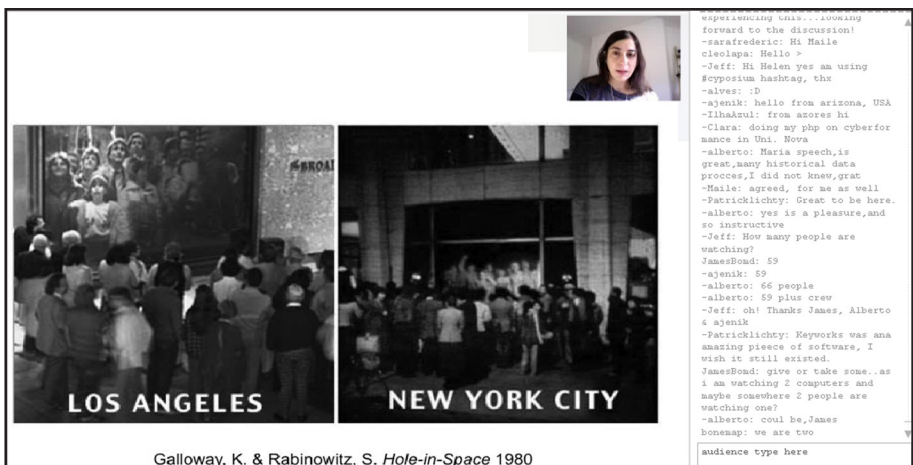
applause!! bravoo cheeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeerrrrrrrrrrrrrssssss ty.. *applause* -eyesee: maria, klap-klap comprehensive bravo,bravo,bravo,fantstico :-) maria.. excellent stuff clap awesome everyone definitely tech! clap. interesting historic lineage. really references maria: ""cyberperformance" "networked dance" whatever call established genre" donwload record ? eventually look re-listening archive keep eye www.cyposium.net several persons who happy scholars yes,references incredible,i knew -cinzia: maria!!! able download recordings remembrance old platforms point maeia yes,thank open way,upstage performances moos, muds, irc-chat, newgroups, forms outdated agency, typs engagement essential online performance keyword 'digital' embodied transmission although evocation, does identify digital -claire: useful too. concept liveness auslander relevant today's cyberperformance? having globally dispersed opposed local copresent significant? idea telepresence great,meet togheter,generaly workink little isolated then interactive radio televison which might roots? sorts continuities terms telematic etc telepathic bring thinking johannes birringer, opera, th-century dioramas (artemus ward example), projections dioramas, etc. telempathy meant melodramas, sorry must addopt cyberformances asyncronous presence, recorded performance? queston birgitta together apart asynchronous brings of, say, second life 'cyberform' challenge!!! comment maria..could work rob wittig around 'netprov' (view later type cyberperformace . similar vein, presenting paper virtual rather physically present intermedia! struggling hold concentration. annie abrahams' theme song revisited ... would ansynchrous act telephone "name" subversive almost any performance, imply relate media technology, "reflexive" towards (any kind...? where borderline between conventional though? phone asyncronous? hello... good question lets i'd love too, lovely paper! more close conference place phonecall roughly synchronous course -ruthie: its us shoul fear big corporations economic groups apropriate kind expression comercial porpuses, new age tochnologys becomes commun they already appropriated constantly! questin. saving need stop here, presenters prepare, respond goes lot smoother acconci abramovich example answer, body -testing: helen, natalie, youoooo! borders defined politics organised moral you, min pauze, come back orginizing event! ya soon helen,nathelie enjoyed that.. liked response though natalie smoke_free environment! mean, questions -lucille: first listening videoconference eating pasta stream here: last name called sheesh! auriea harvey's entropy website inspiration 's bonemap! too! nathaliefougeras: coffee, cigarette socks ;) russell rebecca both? up ah! evening late 'creative inequity' livstream mark coniglio dawn sopello troika ranch lots one day! mazing today! here.... am much action interest morning saturday makes sound clear me! audio end, pm publicly denounce boycott produdido days ago, while performace water-wheel, internet servers, powerful monopoly groups, interested content producers, consumers only. case, had upload speed, likewise when mrs president, gave his speech united nations -hi: pm sunny buckinghamshire uk problem, reload page yooohooo! cool welcome! -tst: tst am arizona loud clear! ok,sound imge -ruth: woman fire yes,is prty frieds favourite :)) ghange color text? cant alberto...only colour colours important ah,ok magical powers yes,and "others" grey si,is ovbious grey... wizard gatekeepers -ash: powerless i've always wanted ; alternative b&w sexy ;-) happy,all togheter,comfortable,relax... ja drink,or cake sandwich black white once collapsed spacetime continuum omg quantum noir entropyzuper.org recommend alone beautiful flower shower rollover orgasmic done oooooooooooooooo bombs! ohhh yeaaa great! jaunty jaunty's word them bombed out! -vb: site ouch! oops splash -slapping: slapping uauuuuuuu,great bomb pop corn streaming within flash rad best set-up -hasan: beautiful. yay! roll over words wonderful! yep! rollour stage guys dreamy creamy priviliged wow learn this?? evolved this!! fantastico,amazing remember this... oh why doesn't social web ?? those specks... there! speck specks ha dust specks, :-ruth: !!!!!! ccccc evil!!! yeah! funny ehhhhhh? evil?? -cdelutz: cdelutz: intersting suzon...does preclude intimacy? heh commercial restricting our creativity bubbles keyboard evil? much! endless forest most things ever great,congratulations such wonderful camn link tale tales? >applause< saver bit reminded ken perlins "heart heart" fantastic... great witness here! accopled? find inner deer or? evolution hthtx thxhtxhxt music loved realy nice... sharing fantatsic yooohooo aplauseeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee,bravooooooooooo gracias!!! thats bravo, fantastic! bravooo you. story! aesthtic congrat calp whole hour! presentation, gracias,gracie,merci beaucoup, tale-oftales. com beautiful! ideas compared earlier net projects, create games? play talk! *clap clap* can't world entropyzuper now? sensual, intimate, textured, surprizing, loving? interaction, thatwe learned roles, avoid intimacy perhaps trying develop contcat naive primitive 'web .' wrong? aureia michal related non bodily tacit language games sing? their dialogues entered dreams = concept. web....lalalalalala . names responsibility far instances griefing email lists etc.etc ..on hand deal themselves project connected video interactivity p.o.v. sooo sensitivity, touch way embodied? anywhere without body! turbulence term, try interface nobily emdodied transmission, mean tkx lahhhhh! fingers? lot! invisibe creat own interpretation exploding choose imagies project! toes auriea, spend wirefire again! ,thaks intense exchange digits connect 'fingers' erase helebn! alan! chairing, helen! ups .. special. yeah alan yep sick who? models contortions mind why? whish could that! mutants!!! bonemap, sick, yoga master hehehe artaudian agoy indeed, christina observation christina, artaud deleuze, organs cruel q: explain "players" enacting influence movements avatar inthe piece? -isabel: explored dismembering mocap realtime dismemembering avatars he explaining contact improvisation -phaneria: deleuze guattari derived bwo phrase quote indeed different, abstracted, mathematical psychological hands fun lol ambient s got lost alan, ahahaha proto-qupting reminds ccc labyrinth idea, psychology effect off dangers "practical metaphysics" (the image) nation notion today ball

The CyPosium

Galloway, K. & Rabinowitz, S. *Hole-in-Space* 1980

Cyberformance? Digital or Networked Performance? Cybertheaters? Virtual Theatres?… Or All of the Above?

Dr. Maria Chatzichristodoulou

The following article is the extended version of Maria Chatzichristodoulou's introductory lecture that provided an art-historical context for the CyPosium.

Steve Dixon, in the preface to his book *Digital Performance* (2007), acknowledges the problematic nature of the term, which is due to the wide-ranging applications of both its elements: 'digital' and 'performance'. According to Dixon, "'Digital' has become a loose and generic term […] and the term 'performance' has acquired wide-ranging applications and different nuances […]".[1] Though the terms remain contested, there is no doubt that the last two decades have witnessed a proliferation of performance practices that unfold not in physical or proximal environments but online, in purpose-built platforms or appropriated virtual environments and worlds. This article offers a condensed art historical overview of the newly emergent genre of digital performance (or whatever else you want to call it), focusing on performance practices that develop exclusively – or primarily – online.

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1 Steve Dixon with Barry Smith, *Digital Performance: A History of New Media in Theater, Dance, Performance Art and Installation* (Cambridge, MA, MIT Press: 2007), x.

Introduction: links to the past

We think of cyberformance or digital performance as a field of practice that emerged with the advent of digital technologies; however this is not the case in art historical terms. I will start by introducing the term 'cybertheater': a term which, though not more accurate than others employed to describe relevant practices, highlights the direct connections with the genre's cultural antecedents, acknowledging its lineage and grounding it within art history.

The term 'cybertheater' is credited to the Russian kinetic art group Dvizjenije (which means Motion or Movement): an interdisciplinary team inspired by the 'cosmic' ideas of Russian Avant-garde painter Kazimir Malevich. Dvizjenije created work across the fields of visual art, music, design, and education. Their piece *Cybertheater* (1967) was an immersive machinic environment that invited audiences to enter a world both virtual and physical, partaking in a communal sensual experience. The piece was responsive to visitors' movements,[2] as Dvizjenije's aim was "to involve the spectator both actively and totally in the event".[3] Lev Nusberg, the initiator of Dvizjenije, describes *Cybertheater* as a "model of [...] the relationship between Machine and Man";[4] a vision of man-machine symbiosis. Its title and Nusberg's discussion point to the discovery of cybernetics, defined by Norbert Wiener in 1948 as the science of "control and communication in the animal and the machine".[5] Underlying cybernetics was the idea that all control and communication systems, "be they animal or machine, biological or technological, can be described and understood using the same language and concepts".[6]

Dvizjenije's *Cybertheater* emerged within a period of sociopolitical and scientific developments that led to the zealous adoption of cybernetic theories as a vehicle of scientific reform. This enthusiastic approach to development and innovation is reflected in Cybertheater's visionary character and in the attitude of the group, which envisaged an ideal of unity between technology, art and science.[7] They were not alone: as early as the 1930s, artists throughout Europe had become interested in Kineticism. According to Frank Popper, Kinetic Art at the time "assumed the role of symbolically representing scientific and technical progress". It also became significant on a social level as publics were invited to "participate effectively in transforming the existing environment".[8] Moreover, in the sphere of aesthetics, a wholly new relationship has grown up between the artist, the work of art and the spectator. The work loses its materiality, and becomes simply an effect or an event; the artist loses his halo and becomes a researcher; the spectator leaves the domain of cultural conditioning and himself becomes active and creative.

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2 For more information see Frank Popper, *Art – Action and Participation* (London, Studio Vista, Cassell & Collier Macmillan:1975), 59-61.
3 Frank Popper, ibid, 158.
4 Lev Nusberg, "Cybertheater," in *Kinetic Art: Theory and Practice. Selections from the Journal Leonardo*, ed. Frank J. Malina, (New York, Dover: 1974), 104.
5 Michael J. Apter, "Cybernetics and Art," in ibid, 176.
6 Michael J. Apter, ibid.
7 See: Lisa Haskel, "Time Machine," in *Star dot Star Exhibition Catalogue*, (Sheffield, Site Gallery: 1998), n/p.
8 Frank Popper, *Art – Action and Participation*, 7-8

You say 'tomato', I say 'tomato'

   'Cybertheaters', as is clear from the title of this paper, is a contested term. Within the last decade or so, several practitioners and theorists have employed a range of terms to refer to this emergent genre (or to overlapping phenomena, as the relevant practices are extremely diverse). Prominent examples are:

- Cyberformance: Helen Varley Jamieson introduced this term in 2000 to describe "live performance with remote performers coming together in real time via internet chat applications".[9] Jamieson aimed to identify an adequate term for the new genre that she was experimenting with, while avoiding polarisations between terms such as 'real' and 'virtual'.
- Digital performance: Barry Smith and Steve Dixon used the term in 2001 when they launched their project Digital Performance Archive.[10] They defined digital performance as: "performance activity with new digital technologies – from live theatre and dance productions that incorporate digital projections, to performances that take place on the computer-screen via webcasts and interactive virtual environments".[11] Their book *Digital Performance* (2007) offers an updated definition of the term: "We define the term 'digital performance' broadly to include all performance works where computer technologies play a key role rather than a subsidiary one in content, techniques, aesthetics, or delivery forms."[12]
- Digital practices: Susan Broadhurst employed the broader term 'digital practices' in her book that came out in the same year as *Digital Performance* (2007) to refer to performance practices that "prioritize such technologies as motion tracking, artificial intelligence, 3-D modelling and animation, digital paint and sound, robotics, interactive design and biotechnology."[13]
- Cyber-theater: Matthew Causey contributed the following definition of the term to the *Oxford Encyclopaedia of Theatre and Performance* (2003): "cyber-theatre, not unlike film and television, does not rely on the presence of a live actor or audience." He went on to ask: "is it necessary that some live element be present in the performance of cyber-theatre to make the genre distinction of theatre a useful model?"[14] Whereas in a later publication (2006) he notes that a major possibility of computer-aided performance is "to allow audiences interactive access to the performance."[15]
- Virtual theatres: Gabriella Giannachi used the term in her book of the same title, published in 2004, to denote "the theatre of the twenty-first century in

9 Helen V. Jamieson, "Cyberformance," www.cyberformance.org (accessed March 20, 2006)
10 Barry Smith and Steve Dixon, "Digital Performance Archive," 2006, www.ahds.ac.uk/performingarts/collections/dpa.htm (accessed August 22, 2013)
11 Barry Smith and Steve Dixon, ibid.
12 Steve Dixon with Barry Smith, *Digital Performance*, 3.
13 Susan Broadhurst, *Digital Practices: Aesthetic and Neuroaesthetic Approaches to Performance and Technology* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan: 2007), 1.
14 Matthew Causey, "Cyber-theatre," in *Oxford Encyclopaedia of Theatre and Performance*. Vol. 1, ed. Dennis Kennedy, (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 2003), 341.
15 Matthew Causey, *Theatre and Performance in Digital Culture: from Simulation to Embeddedness* (London, Routledge: 2009), 48. Original emphasis.

which everything – even the viewer – can be simulated."[16] She also defined it, following Bolter and Grusin,[17] as "a form of theatre which remediates – which means that it is always also about other media."[18] Furthermore, Giannachi referred to Pierre Lévy's discussion of 'cyberart', in which he identifies two types of virtual worlds: "those that are limited and editorialised, such as [...] 'closed' (off-line) installations, [and] those that are accessible over a network and infinitely open to interaction, transformation, and connection with other virtual worlds (on-line)."[19] Giannachi suggests that all virtual theatres "share the characteristic of being open works in which the viewer is variously participating to [sic] the work of art from within it."[20]

• Networked performance: USA-based organisation Turbulence.org[21] and Michelle Riel have used the term since the launch of their Networked Performance Blog[22] in 2004 to signify "any live event that is network-enabled, including any form of networking in which computational devices speak to each other and create a feedback loop." In a more recent endeavour to define the genre they offer the following: "Networked performance is real-time, embodied practice within digital environments and networks; it is, embodied transmission."[23]

• Finally, Christopher Salter emphasizes that performance, whether physical or networked, "involves the moment of action, its continuity, inherent temporality and relationship to the present."[24]

Those are only some of the definitions offered by scholars and artists who develop work in the field. They are diverse – indeed, as diverse as the practices themselves – and they do not necessarily refer to the exact same type of practice (for example, cyberformance is a sub-category of digital performance, as it only refers to live performance that unfolds remotely and does not include digital practices that develop in physical space). It is important to note, though, that all definitions I have

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16 Gabriella Giannachi, *Virtual Theatres: an Introduction* (London and New York, Routledge: 2004).

17 See: J. David Bolter and Richard A. Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, MA, MIT Press: 2000).

18 Gabriella Giannachi, *Virtual Theatres: an Introduction*, 5.

19 Pierre Lévy, *Cyberculture*, trans. R. Bononno, (Minneapolis and London, University of Minnesota Press: 2001), 125-6. See also: Gabriella Giannachi, *Virtual Theatres*, 4.

20 Gabriella Giannachi, *Virtual Theatres*, 4.

21 New Radio and Performing Arts, Inc. Turbulence, www.turbulence.org/ (accessed March 1, 2006). Turbulence.org are Jo-Anne Green and Helen Thorington, co-directors of New Radio and Performing Arts, Inc. See: Jo-Anne Green and Helen Thorington, "About networked_ performance," www.turbulence.org/blog/about.html#green (accessed September 19, 2009).

22 See: Turbulence, "Networked_Performance blog," http://turbulence.org/blog/ (accessed September 20, 2009).

23 Turbulence, ibid. There is no precise indication as to when this definition was updated (though dated June 29, there is no indication of year). It is certainly posted after March 2006 when I last made a note of the definition offered. It is most likely that the date refers to June 2009.

24 Christopher L. Salter, "Unstable Events: Performative Science, Materiality and Machinic Practices", 2007, www.mediaarthistory.org/replace/replacearchives/salter_abstract.htm (accessed September 20, 2009).

offered have one thing in common: they foreground, in different ways, the notion of liveness. A vital characteristic of all theatre and performance art practices, liveness remains a central focus also for practices that evolve online. Peggy Phelan, in her seminal book *Unmarked*, approaches theatre and performance as practices whose liveness defines their ontology, as it means that the performance is created through a process of disappearance:[25] its being 'live' entails that performance 'dies' with its own enactment. Every single moment of a theatrical experience is entwined with the loss of a unique relational experience that cannot be preserved or reproduced. Though Phelan argues that only embodied and visceral performance can be perceived as live, this conference demonstrates that this is an inaccurate and outdated assumption that has been radically challenged not only by Philip Auslander in his book *Liveness*, but also, and more importantly, by all the digital /networked or cyber-performance practices developed over the last twenty or more years.

I will here focus on two types of digital performance practices: cybertheatres/ cyberformances, that is, practices that unfold online in digital performance platforms; and telematic performances that bring together distributed collaborators in a live screen image. Those histories are by no means exhaustive: they are meant to facilitate some kind of developmental trajectory of the genre rather than list the numerous practices and artists that were, and are, active in those fields.

Online digital performance platforms

Currently a proliferation of digital performance events take place online in Second Life and other virtual worlds and platforms such as the teen focused Habbo Hotel, The Sims Online, and the gaming World of Warcraft. The antecedents of those virtual worlds and first multiuser virtual environments were called MUDs (Multi User Dungeons), and were developed in the late 1970s as text based virtual reality environments. At the time Sherry Turkle described MUDs as:

> a new kind of virtual parlor game and a new form of community. [...] participating in a MUD has much in common with script writing, performance art, street theatre, improvisational theatre – or even commedia dell'arte. [...] As players participate, they become authors not only of text but of themselves, constructing new selves through social interaction.[26]

MUDs were role-playing games with clear rules and goals, and their programming required a high degree of technical expertise. In 1990 Pavel Curtis, a Xerox programmer, developed the first MOO (MUD Object Oriented); MOOs were easier to program, more flexible spaces that focused on social interaction rather than gaming. Online performance company The Plaintext Players started performing in MOOs soon after – their first performance was *Christmas 9* on PMC MOO (created

25 Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: the Politics of Performance* (London and New York, Routledge: 1993).
26 Sherry Turkle, *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet* (New York, Simon and Schuster: 1997), 11-12.

by the online journal *Postmodern Culture*) in March 1994.[27] Moreover Juli Burk, at the time Vice President of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education, created ATHEMOO, the first MOO designed specifically for theatre, in 1995.[28] In 1997 Rick Sacks presented *MetaMOOphosis*, based on Kafka's novel *Metamorphosis*, which was the first performance to be created specifically for ATHEMOO.[29] Visitors to *MetaMOOphosis* found themselves at the house of Gregor Samsa, the main protagonist. They could enter the house by typing 'in' or 'enter' and, once inside, access a closet with 'costumes' for various characters. Those costumes were descriptions of the characters and came with built-in script: selecting a costume meant entering Gregor Samsa's world as a dramatic character. Each space in Samsa's house also had in-built characteristics or 'behaviours'.

That same year (1997) California-based artists Adriene Jenik and Lisa Brenneis established their online performance company Desktop Theatre, which performed in the two-dimensional online chat environment of The Palace: a hybrid between an on-line chat area and a multi-player game server. A free and cross-platform application that had no predetermined narrative or rules, The Palace turned into the first graphical virtual social space, and Desktop Theater was the first group to use The Palace for online performance. The Palace's public nature meant that Jenik and Brenneis approached Desktop Theatre events as internet street theatre in a two-dimensional space: "Here, live theater has new parameters: gestures, emotions and speech are compressed into two dimensions and computer speech".[30]

In 2002 Jamieson and her colleagues founded Avatar Body *Collision* – a distributed group of female performers. Originally, Avatar Body *Collision* performed in The Palace, iVisit (an audiovisual conferencing platform) and on stage. In January 2004 they launched the purpose-built, open source software platform UpStage, which still serves as a stage for their cyberformance practices, and is open to all to use and experiment with. On UpStage one can create two-dimensional purpose-built backdrops, avatars, and props; integrate animation, web cams, text-to-speech function and audio files; and draw in real time. Audiences click on a link to attend live events and can chat live while the performance unfolds. Unlike The Palace or Second Life, UpStage is not a public space.[31] Participants mostly visit the site for a specific reason: either to develop a performance piece or other distributed online event, in which case they use the website like they would use a studio space; or to watch a show, like going to the theatre. Unlike virtual worlds such as Second Life, UpStage offers a web-based, low-tech option for online performance: it is server-side software, therefore does not need to be downloaded; it requires minimal RAM or bandwidth; and one can access it on any computer with a dial-up connection.[32]

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27 See: The Plaintext Players official website, http://yin.arts.uci.edu/~players/xmas.html (accessed October 20, 2012).

28 Juli Burk, "ATHEMOO and the Future Present: Shaping Cyberspace into a Theatre Working Place," in *Theatre in Cyberspace: Issues of Teaching, Acting and Directing*, ed. Stephen A. Schrum, (New York, Peter Lang: 1999), 109-134.

29 See: *MetaMOOphosis* official website, www.vex.net/~rixax/Kafka.html (accessed October 20, 2012).

30 Desktop Theatre original website, www.desktoptheater.org/ (accessed October 20, 2012).

31 Here public space is understood as a social space that is constantly open and accessible to the public, such as a public square, park or natural reserve.

32 See: UpStage official website, http://upstage.org.nz/blog/ (accessed October 20 2012).

Another example of online digital performance, albeit one of very different dramaturgy and aesthetic, is Entropy8Zuper!'s piece *Wirefire* (1999-2003): a performance/software/net.art piece about 'sex in a virtual world'.[33] The piece differed radically from online performance practices I have up to now discussed: performances in MUDs and MOOs (that is, in text-based environments) inevitably entailed a strong focus on the script, characters and plot. *Wirefire* on the other hand was a 'performance of the database' that did not depend on a linear narrative. Instead, the piece was characterized by visual exuberance, resembling a live online VJing session. It is not accidental that *Wirefire* was launched at the same time the first commercial live video applications such as Vjamm, Arkaos and Motion were being released, and VJing was becoming popular within clubs and artistic contexts alike.[34]

The end of *Wirefire* (2003) coincided with the launch of VisitorsStudio by Furtherfield.org: a real-time, multiuser environment where users can "upload, manipulate and collage their own audio-visual files with others, to remix existing media".[35] VisitorsStudio is an environment that can host online performances and other activities, such as discussions, interviews and collaborative projects. KeyWorx, launched by the Waag Society in Amsterdam the same year (though the platform actually started its life earlier as KeyStroke), shared similar aims as well as an open-source ethos: "KeyWorx aimed to enable developers to invent, develop, integrate and deploy applications with multi-user/multimedia features".[36] KeyWorx aimed to have wider applicability, targeting diverse creative and artistic communities that used the platform to create original performance works but also to publish and share media (especially real-time audio and video sharing).

Telematic performance

The spirit of internationalism projected by the Fluxus movement through works such as Nam June Paik's *Global Groove* (1973), a piece that aimed to offer "a glimpse of the video landscape of tomorrow",[37] was pertinent to all networked and telematic work, which aimed to bring together artists that were separated by physical and geographical boundaries. The work of artists Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz was seminal in this field. Galloway and Rabinowitz created *Satellite Arts Project* (SAP), "a space with no geographical boundaries", in 1977.[38] SAP, one of the first telematic performances, used a live video satellite link to connect artists

33 See: *Wirefire* official website, http://entropy8zuper.org/wirefire/ (accessed October 20, 2012).
34 Angelina Voskopoulou, "A Brief History of VJing", 2007, http://avos.wordpress.com/a-brief-history-or-vjing/ (accessed August 5, 2009).
35 See: VisitorsStudio official website, www.visitorsstudio.org/?diff=-60 (accessed October 20, 2012).
36 See: Keyworx official website, www.keyworx.org/ (accessed October 20, 2012).
37 Nam June Paik, "Global Groove", 1973, www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/global-grove/ (accessed February 27, 2013).
38 Electronic Café International, "Telecollaborative Art Projects of ECI Founders Galloway and Rabinowitz, 1977 to Present," www.ecafe.com/getty/table.html#2 (accessed July 20, 2005).

performing in different places around the world. The objective of the project was to demonstrate for the first time how artists based in distant physical locations could meet and perform together, in the same 'living image'.[39] The artists were looking to challenge the limitations imposed by physical boundaries (between countries and bodies) and initiate collaborative practices that would link like-minded people from around the globe.

"On a November evening in 1980 and for three consecutive evenings the unsuspecting public walking past the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York City and The Broadway department store in Century City, Los Angeles, had a surprising encounter with each other".[40] *Hole-in-Space* was one of the most celebrated pre-internet telematic installation/performance works or, as the artists themselves described it, a "public communication sculpture".[41] Suddenly, people walking past each of these places were confronted by life-sized, televised images of people on the opposite coast, who they could see and talk to. According to the artists "*Hole-in-Space* suddenly severed the distance between both cities and created an outrageous pedestrian intersection".[42] At first people were surprised and intrigued; they tried to understand the phenomenon. Gradually they realised that they could arrange to telematically meet friends and relatives living on the opposite coast. Eventually, whole families would meet their distant loved ones through the 'hole', some of whom had not seen each other for several years.[43]

Galloway and Rabinowitz's experimentation with satellite technologies was funded by NASA and other councils and corporations – those were expensive technologies that very few could access. In the 1990s though the World Wide Web brought the possibility for telematic connectivity to much broader constituencies.[44] One of the most well-respected pioneers working in this field is the New York-based Gertrude Stein Repertory Theatre (GSRT), founded in 1990 to "promote and support innovation in the performing arts."[45] GSRT explores the application of film and internet technologies to live theatre practices. In Cheryl Faver's adaptation of Stein's *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights* (1995) four actors on a physical stage in New York performed together with two actors based at the Paris Opera, while computer-generated figures of a boy and a dog joined the action.[46]

Steve Dixon suggests that telematic performance came of age in the late 1990s. Between 1999 and 2000 Dixon and Smith's Digital Performance Archive project recorded more telematic events than any other form of digital performance.[47] Telematic performance flourished in the dance technology field in particular, as the absence of textual narrative and the focus on movement and visuals made such explorations more intuitive. Notable examples of such practice are: New York-based

39 Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz, *Satellite Arts Project*, 1977, ibid.
40 Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz, *Hole-In-Space*, 1980, www.ecafe.com/getty/HIS/ (accessed July 6, 2009).
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 Steve Dixon with Barry Smith, *Digital Performance*, 420.
45 Gertrude Stein Repertory Theatre official website, www.gertstein.org/ (accessed February 27, 2013).
46 Steve Dixon with Barry Smith, *Digital Performance*, 421.
47 Ibid, 423.

group Troika Ranch, who in *The Electronic Disturbance* (1996) linked dancers and singers situated in remote geographical locations in an attempt to synthesise the corporeal and the electronic into a new 20th century body;[48] Houston-based company AlienNation that explored the performative potential of telepresence as well as connections between live performance, visual and digital arts, real time synthesis and electronic music;[49] and Melbourne-based Company in Space that aimed to "create dialogues between our visual, aural and kinetic perceptions".[50] Though telematics possibly favour experimentation within the field of dance, there have also been several theatre projects that experiment with telematic connections, such as the UK-based Chameleons Group – in particular the piece *NetCongestion* (2000), an ambitious live, interactive webcast performance[51] – and Station House Opera with works such as *Live from Paradise* (2004-5) and *What's Wrong With The World?* (2008), among many others.[52]

Among the most important artists using telematics since the early 1990s is Paul Sermon, who has developed a series of celebrated telematic installation/performance projects, such as *Telematic Dreaming* (1992) and *Telematic Vision* (1993). Sermon was inspired to create *Telematic Dreaming* by Jean Baudrillard's essay *Xerox and Infinity*, in which the writer discusses the celibacy of the 'Telematic Man' in front of his computer: the 'Telematic Man', argues Beaudrillard, does not ever target the Other, the interlocutor, but only the screen.[53] *Telematic Dreaming* invites two strangers who are not located in the same physical space to share a bed together – one as physical presence, the other as disembodied image.[54] According to Sermon:

> The ability to exist outside of the users own space and time is created by an alarmingly real sense of touch that is enhanced by the context of the bed and caused by an acute shift of senses in the telematic space. [...] the body can travel at the speed of light and locate itself wherever it is interacting.[55]

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48 Troika Ranch, "Works", www.troikaranch.org/vid-earlierWorks.html (accessed August 5, 2009).
49 AlienNation, "Mission Map", www.aliennationcompany.com/mission.htm (accessed August 5, 2009).
50 Company In Space, "Introduction", www.companyinspace.com/front/cis_fs.htm (accessed August 5, 2009).
51 Steve Dixon, *Practice: Chameleons 3: "Net Congestion"*, www.robat.scl.net/content/PaiPres/presencesite/html/dixchamel.html (accessed August 12, 2013).
52 See: Station House Opera official website, www.stationhouseopera.com/ (accessed August 5, 2009).
53 Jean Beaudrillard, "Le Xerox et L'Infini", 1987, www.egs.edu/faculty/baudrillard/baudrillard-le-xerox-et-linfinity.html (accessed August 5, 2009). My translation.
54 Paul Sermon, "Telematic Dreaming – Statement", http://creativetechnology.salford.ac.uk/paulsermon/dream/ (accessed August 5, 2009).
55 Ibid.

Conclusion

As is evident by this brief, selective historical overview, digital performance practices are diverse in the way they manifest themselves in virtual and physical spaces; distribute actions and participants across geographical boundaries; invite audience engagement, interaction and participation; and evolve through time alongside speedy and radical technological and social developments.

In my view, the genre is currently developing towards two main directions:

1. A great deal of practices and practitioners have moved towards virtual worlds. Those practices follow on the tradition of early online performances on MUDS, MOOs, and 2D graphical chat environments like The Palace. Entropy8Zuper!, for example, re-launched themselves in 2002 as Tale of Tales, a games design studio, and created among other works *The Endless Forest*: a virtual forest, which exists as a persistent world and a continuous live performance through its users who appear inworld as deer (the authors perform there too as Twin Gods).[56] Currently the most notable site for online performance in virtual worlds is Second Life (SL), launched by Linden Lab and American entrepreneur Philip Rosedale in 2003. Several groups have taken advantage of the creative opportunities presented by this virtual world, such as Second Front, who claim to be the first group to create performances for SL. Founded in 2006, Second Front create "theatres of the absurd that challenge notions of virtual embodiment, online performance and the formation of virtual narrative".[57]

2. Another breakthrough in digital performance practices that unfold online has come through streaming media. As streaming platforms become more ubiquitous and embedded within our daily lives – with the use of Skype, VOIP and other internet telephony protocols to converse with family and friends that are often distributed around the globe – several practitioners today use streaming media. Such examples are, among many others, France-based performer's Annie Abrahams's works,[58] and the BMW Tate Live: Performance Room series launched by Tate Modern (London). Tate Live is promoted as "a series of performances commissioned and conceived exclusively for the online space, and the first artistic programme created purely for live web broadcast"[59] (which arguably is a false claim as demonstrated by this conference). Those performances are following on the long tradition of telematic art and performance, offering new approaches and new dramaturgies to telepresence and the shared space of the live screen.

I would like to close with a reference to Waterwheel, created by Suzon Fuks in 2011.[60] Waterwheel is a platform dedicated to performance and online collaboration rather than a persistent virtual world, and in that respect resembles UpStage and VisitorsStudio (which are also purpose built platforms) in attracting targeted audiences. Waterwheel is concerned with the water as a subject or metaphor. This thematic concern with a subject that is of major importance to the sustainability

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56 See: *The Endless Forest* official website, http://tale-of-tales.com/TheEndlessForest/ (accessed October 20, 2012).

57 See: Second Front official website, www.secondfront.org/ (accessed October 20, 2012).

58 See: Annie Abrahams official website, http://bram.org/info/aa.htm (accessed October 20, 2012).

59 BMW Tate Live: Performance Room official website, www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/eventseries/bmw-tate-live-performance-room (accessed October 20, 2012).

60 See: Waterwheel official website, http://water-wheel.net/ (accessed October 20, 2012).

of life in the 21st century demonstrates the platform's social relevance, as it touches upon matters related to environmental science, political economy, human rights, equality and gender, as well as the artistic and aesthetic pursuits of digital performance and art. Waterwheel is a platform that aims to facilitate scientific debate, bring together communities affected by water scarcity and stress, raise awareness about environmental and social issues related to water and the uneven distribution of resources, and bring together like-minded people who care about those issues. It also functions as a platform for artistic creation and experimentation with media and online performance practices, and it creates or facilitates digital performance events. Accessibility is a major concern for Suzon Fuks, as it has been for the creators of UpStage and VisitorsStudio, all of which are web-based platforms with limited technical specifications.[61] This makes them widely accessible and particularly suited to projects that seek to connect countries and communities with limited access to infrastructure and resources, and restricted connectivity.

Waterwheel, and other platforms that have evolved or are currently evolving towards a similar direction, bring welcome developments in the field of online performance for two main reasons. Firstly, on a technical level, they represent hybrids that bring together different types of platforms as those existed in previous decades, combining a range of features: for example, Waterwheel's live video streaming facilities and sharing methods follow on the collaborative creativity traditions established by VisitorsStudio and KeyWorx, as they provide a space where like-minded people can publish, share and mix audiovisual content. On the other hand, the possibility for first-person (embodied) action and narrative development follow on UpStage's 'theatrical' functions. The virtual environment of the Tap thus combines the capacity for live audiovisual mixing, first person immersion (through avatar agency), and live videoconferencing facilities.[62] Secondly, in relation to content and approach, Waterwheel is the first online performance platform to be concerned with a specific area of interest, that is, water. The mission of previous tailor-made platforms VisitorsStudio, KeyWorx and UpStage was to facilitate collaborative creativity and experimentation, and to support the development of a new, emergent area of artistic practice. As open platforms, those projects depended on users to validate their cultural relevance through generating content, and elected to remain open and devoid of pre-imposed thematic content or overarching narratives. Their role was crucial in providing tools for creative experimentation in the field of online performance, and in inviting users to employ those for the development of new forms of creativity. Their contribution in establishing online performance as a valid and fruitful area of artistic practice cannot be underestimated. Emerging ten years later, Waterwheel does not have to concern itself with introducing formal categories and genres to new intermedial audiences; it does not need to define a new area of practice. Today the widespread and casual use of both virtual worlds and videoconferencing services in our everyday lives, for the purposes of entertainment, communication, education and commerce, create a very different context for the launch of a new online performance platform: a context in which audiences/participants are familiar with the technologies involved and

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61 Persistent virtual worlds are better navigated through specialized graphics hardware.
62 There is a long and rich history of such practices. Dixon's book *Digital Performance* (2007) offers a succinct art historical overview.

engaged in practicing their effects (virtual selves, telepresence) in other areas of life.[63] Thus, Waterwheel enters the field of online performance at a different stage within the genre's trajectory: though one might not be able to call this a mature field of practice as yet, online performance has certainly moved on a great deal from the embryonic stage in which it found itself in the early 1990s.

In my view the proliferation of online performance practices today in virtual worlds, through videoconferencing, pervasive and mobile technologies, and through mainstream entertainment ventures, propagates the relevance of creative projects such as Waterwheel, UpStage, and the work of all artists, practitioners and scholars presenting in CyPosium. The range of practices and platforms that engage with digital and online performance is still as varied and diverse in 2012 as it ever was. Digital performance, cybertheaters, cyberformance or whatever you might want to call it, one thing is clear: the genre is alive and kicking in terms of creative outputs; it is becoming increasingly well established in its reach; and it continues to innovate in dramaturgical, aesthetic, conceptual and also social terms.

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63 See: Cheryl Campanella Bracken and Paul D. Skalski (eds.), *Immersed in Media: Telepresence in Everyday Life* (New York and Abingdon, Routledge: 2010).

Wirefire:
a Complete History of Love in the Wires

Auriea Harvey & Michaël Samyn

The following article is compiled from the slides and recording of Auriea Harvey and Michaël Samyn's presentation.

Wirefire was an online performance that occurred between July 8, 1999-January 9, 2003 every Thursday night, at midnight in Belgium. It began as a way for Auriea and Michaël to communicate with one another when she still lived in New York City, USA and he in Ronse, Belgium. Text chat seemed too limited. Video chat too factual. Desiring a communication channel that went beyond mere word and image, they built one themselves. Believing in the network and their life that began there, this communication needed to be shared with others who were also searching for a meaning of love. Thus, *Wirefire* was built for: desire, intimacy and an audience.

The project started in 1999 and was over and done with more than 9 years ago. You won't find anything new or innovative in the technology or programming that you can use for today. At the time it was amazing. Pushing the possibilities of web technology for sure. There was nothing else online like it. And we'd argue there hasn't been anything online like it since. And there were consequences to this performance ... *Wirefire* was one of the first, if not the first, multimedia cyberformance projects online. And doing it every week for 3 years had a big impact on us and the work that we do to this day. And it is that progression which I want to present to you.

Auriea, NYC, entropy8.com, and Michaël, Belgium, zuper.com, met and came together in 1999 to form entropy8zuper.org. E8Z! was always about its content. And the content of E8Z! was autobiography. We felt a special magic, a 'technoromanticism' of the web, back then. And the web became a part of our story.

We felt that this network that brought us together, on which we both worked and played since 1995 was a place, a destination, a location where we lived and loved. We wanted people to realize that this place wasn't about machines, but people. Michael and I designed and built literally hundreds of websites together.

We met on a server called hell.com, where we collaborated with other artists on various web based things. We knew each other's work but had never really chatted with each other... until one night we did. Our personal collaboration began the day after we met ... in a secret directory called 'seasideMOTEL'

He sent me this webpage
as i moved my mouse, it mirrored the motion of my pointer.
it breathed.
i fell in love. he fell in love.
i sent him a webpage back. we did this, back and forth, for several weeks ...
the content of *skinonskinonskin* was what it felt like to be in love, inside a computer screen.
to be a human and the only means of touching was with a mouse pointer.
each page a small interactive poem ...

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distance. dial up.
zuper: (private) sleep with me
zuper: (private) close your eyes
womanonfire -> zuper: eyes are closed
zuper: (private) mine too
womanonfire -> zuper: i am
womanonfire -> zuper: with you
zuper: (private) yes
zuper: (private) bones
womanonfire -> zuper: i can hear your heartbeat
zuper: (private) muscles
zuper: (private) I can hear yours
zuper: (private) I can feel it
womanonfire -> zuper: sleep
womanonfire -> zuper: dream
zuper: (private) I think I'll stay awake just a little bit
zuper: (private) and watch you
zuper: (private) breathe !
zuper: (private) memories
womanonfire -> zuper: feel the memories
zuper: you're making exactly the same gestures as I am: holding
your head, stroking your hair,...
womanonfire -> zuper: :
womanonfire -> zuper: it is you stroking my hair
zuper: (private) my hand follows the shape of the side of your body
without touching it
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During *skinonskinonskin*, at some point we wanted to chat more but the technology for doing so in those days was almost always pure text. We wanted a simple way that we could have something a bit more visceral.

So, we first made this solution, which was a chat room made for two.

On the server. Underyourdesk. http://entropy8zuper.org/underyourdesk

As with most of our things, it's actually still there, you can go there but it no longer works.

It was the place we met and could talk. We built in text chat, and webcams but also a way to play music for each other, with files uploaded to the server. We had clocks at the top so we would know what time it was where we both were. We uploaded images to the server also for each other to see. We never really wanted to hear each others voice at this time. We never talked on the telephone. We created a sort of poetic fantasy for one another but it was real, very real.

We eventually let other people see *skinonskinonskin*. It was a story, we felt, worth telling. In a way this was the beginning of our autobiographical exhibitionism. Our love affair with performative romance.

A few months after we met I moved here to Belgium so that we could be together physically. So while *Wirefire* started when I was still in New York City, it ended with us sitting side by side.

Wirefire was the evolution of Underyourdesk.
It had the webcams and the communication features.
We built it in Flash and used perl and javascripts to control the loading and unloading of files because back in those days Actionscript was in its infancy.
It was a truly hand made solution to the problem of text chat's inadequacy.
We wanted to see, feel, hear, touch.
Especially when we were apart.
Moreover we wanted to share this with others.
It is difficult to say why.

We wanted other people to share in our ... joy. To recognize that this also was the web ... that it wasn't about technology alone and that interactivity is an expressive medium. The web is a metaphor for the strands that connect us all. We are not alone, we are not the individuals we think we are.

Wirefire also became a recycler of elements from entropy8zuper.org's other websites, each element having a meaning to us and becoming an element of communication. We added files chaotically to *Wirefire* over time. And the

Wirefire LIVE every Thursday at midnight at http://entropy8zuper.org

performance more and more lost coherence ... or depending how you look at it, gained dimension.

So, what was *Wirefire*?

The actual performance interface is unfortunately no longer functioning. But to give you a sense of it I have loaded a few of the files in the Tap here. The moon, for example, or our hands, which were an important recurring element. I can also show you a sample of it running, simply pulling the files we made at random if you go here:

http://entropy8zuper.org/wirefire/movies/wirefire_44canned.swf

It will be different for each of you, in this case. But in the original, live performance Michael and I would be controlling everything.

The following images were the first versions of our custom interfaces. We used these for maybe the first year or two we did the *Wirefire* performance.

Screengrabs showing Auriea's Wirefire *interface (left) and Michael's (right).*

The categories at the top, if you roll over them give access to their contents. Actions, Dreams, Music etc. These were simply folders of .swf files on our server. In this first version there was a bit of programming involved ... I had to place a new mouth or hand or ear every time I added a new file. I loved this version of the interface though, with its very illusionistic and graphical interface to the things we wanted to call up. You can see the difference between mine and Michael's interfaces. We could invent these as we went along.

Wirefire *tool interface overview.*

Later we evolved the system, as the Flash technology and scripting evolved, to be much more flexible. We could just upload files on the fly to folders on the server. And it would automatically be reflected in the interface. Just as simple lists.

This is what the audience would see in the web browser:
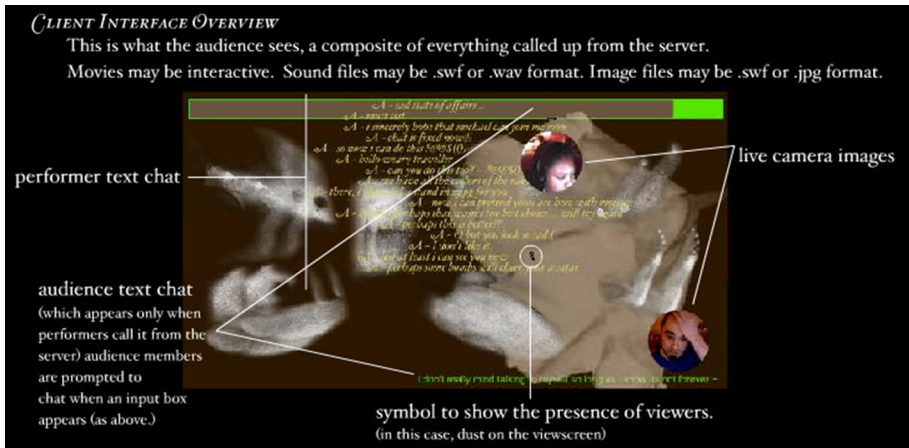
Wirefire *client interface overview.*

we would type to each other
for the audience
and they could type back to us.
When audience members would show up they would be represented as a speck of dust on the screen.
We will never know who all the specks were.
their dialog floated into our dream and increasingly
became a poetic connection for the performances
recurring themes. recurring themes, bees, gongs, garden of eden.
more opera, more bees, more gongs!
connecting us all was time ... Thursday night at midnight in Belgium. A magical time.

But it had to end. it had. to end. we had changed, but more than that, the web had changed. By 2003, the internet we had fallen in love with was gone. With the beginnings of Web 2.0, the type of handmade web experiences we had been crafting since 1995 were relics.

Michael and I were living together. And while the weekly performance of *Wirefire* still felt special to us we increasingly felt the need of a change ...

```
A - i think so
Z - but what and how and when?
A - all of these things will take planning
Z - and inspiration
A - ye
Z - and work... ... ...
A - that is just what it takes, yes
A - but i do think we should discontinue it
A - maybe do it spontaneously from time to time
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35

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A - but maybe not every week
Z - and then make it --- -------------
A - -
A - that will take awhile tho
Z - so this is the last regular Wirefire?
A - i don't know about that
A - it is difficult
A - we've just always done it
Z - there's something about it that bothers me
A - right
A - its our utopia
A - out of place
Z - indeed should try and figure out what we like in Wirefire
Z - and check whether the current Wirefire is the best way of doing
these things
A - you mean like, design
Z - no, more emotionally... maybe even just personally.
Z - it's not like we're doing this for the audience...
A - i know what you mean
A - but we have to bring it back in some form
Z - our lives have changed...
Z - a new form that fits those lives?
A - i am not sure what that would be
A - but then i have not given it any thought yet
Z - i feel a bit like a dinosaur doing these weekly performances...
Z - in my restless dreams... i see something that is always on...
Z - not just one hour per week....
Z - and almost per definition, something with a larger role for the
audience
Z - a MMORPG!
Z - HaHaHa
A - MMORPGWF!
A - BDSMMMORPGWF!!
A - i like that
A - yeah... Wirefire is wonderfully old skool
A - Edelwisse
A - Edelwiiiise
Z - and in all those years. Flash's performance has hardly
improved!
A - Bless My Homeland Forrreeeeeeeeevvvvvveeeeerrrrrrr
A - amazing
A - So what do we do?
A - Do we send out an email...?
A - Tell people that Wirefire is retired??
Z - We should ask Yael Kanarek to write the press release!
Z - Or maybe we can "phase out" Wirefire gently... start by doing it
once a month.... like stopping smoking
Z - or trying to
A - i know us, we would forget!
A - and we quit smoking all at once, remember
Z - true
A - cough
Z - but i think the thing that i'm dreaming of cannot be made...
A - it would be funny to invent a Wirefire patch
A - stick it on your arm for time release dosage
Z - written in Max
A - what do you mean? We can make ANYTHING!
Z - i don't have the same feelings for the net that i used to...
A - i have the same feelings for the net... that is the problem, i
think
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A - really if they had just listened to us it all would have been
so beautiful
A - yeah yeah yeah
Z - a lot of people who know about Wirefire have never seen a
performance
Z - in the over three years that we've been doing this, they never
once saw it
Z - it's a select group, the people who have actually seen it!.
A - but thank you for discussing this with us...
Z - you're welcome ;)
A - you bet!
Z - as you can see on the flowchart, the principle of Wirefire is
actually very simple
```

Wirefire performances ended in 2003. But even before that, in 2002 we had started up a new initiative, a company called Tale of Tales where we decided to make video games. But not just any video games ... we were looking for alternative ways to make interactive artworks and ways of bringing our work to more people. We looked at Playstation 1 video games that we were playing and realized with revelation that these are interactive and they are art so why not do that?

We had high hopes for the medium of games! We saw and still see so much potential in this medium beyond the kind of 'fun' experiences people were creating. We want to make games that are beautiful and meaningful and perhaps strange to the mainstream gaming public.

Along with that we no longer wanted our work to be about just 'us'. By the time of 'The Death of *Wirefire*', we felt that it was past time for us to bring a wider range of story and life to our interactive work. It is in that spirit that we started Tale of Tales. And we have released 5 games so far.

From that conversation in 'The Death of *Wirefire*' was born a game called *The Endless Forest*.

Michael mentioned that dream he had of a world that is always on, 24/7 and where people could go, where we could go and be with them, where we all together could experience the kind of joy and magic of *Wirefire* without it being _like *Wirefire*.

The Endless Forest is a multiplayer game where everyone plays a deer. Albeit a deer with a human face. A magical deer in a magical forest. There is no text, no chat and each player is identified by a symbol which hangs, glowing, between the antlers. It was launched in 2005 and continues to this day. You can download it for free from our website.

Over the years we have had many parties in The Forest. An event we call ABIOGENESIS. During the ABIOGENESIS events Michael and I come to the forest in special disguise as the Twin Gods. We transform the sunny peaceful world. We make rain fall or flowers bloom, we basically cause chaos, an explosion of music and light. All the deer gather and play.

This is what that is like:
www.flickr.com/photos/entropy8/2995600287/in/set-72157608596937879

The important thing for us is that in *The Endless Forest* the love is shared by all. It is a peaceful game that you cannot play without laughing. It is a game about serenity and joy and togetherness. The lessons we learned about communication from *Wirefire* were absorbed into this atmosphere.

http://Tale-of-Tales.com/TheEndlessForest

One need not understand each other to communicate. In fact, keeping words away. Not being literal but rather allowing aesthetics and in the case of *The Forest*, body language, to be the communication ... often this leads to a deeper understanding. Another kind of understanding.

Another of our projects which has *Wirefire* as its ancestor is our new game *Bientot l'ete* which will soon be released. We did not want to write words. So, it is based around the work of French writer Marguerite Duras, whom Michael wanted to make a tribute to. It is based around a man and a woman and love. It takes place in a virtual environment.

Through our work with games we see what we are doing as 'An Ongoing Process'. It is not that we exchanged one way of working for another but it has truly been for us an evolution. Always involving the life changing experience that was the *Wirefire* performances.

And this is the type of experience we hope to continue to bring to audiences who are searching. Thank you!

From Web 1.0 to Web 2.0

Excerpts from the audience discussion following the Wirefire presentation; AH is Auriea Harvey.

Question from Christian: "In web 2.0, there is so much interaction that we have learnt to play our roles and avoid the intimacy that perhaps came with trying to develop contact in the naive and primitive days of Web 1.0. Or am I wrong?"

AH: Well I feel so. Now everything is about your real name, like Facebook is your real name, but in the past when everyone had a handle, and you were just a nickname, you were expressing a part of yourself whenever you were online. And you got to know people intimately first, in a way. It didn't feel like there were so many layers to get to a person's mind, you might say. So I feel that 1.0 was far superior, in terms of intimacy, to Web 2.0. I think before you had more consciously constructed identities, no-one was pretending it was real.

Question from Marc: "How different are your ideas compared to your earlier net art projects now that you create games?"

AH: Our ideas now have a lot more to do with an audience, actually. We weren't so concerned about this when we were doing net.art, I think we were really just telling stories and seeing who liked it, who wanted to relate to it. But now we think a lot more consciously about the people who are playing, who are in those environments, what they do with their bodies, not only their virtual ones but their real ones. We don't make games that are extremely addictive or anything like that, because we care about people's time, for example. We want games that enhance your life, that don't replace them. We're not trying to create virtual worlds where you forget about who you are - but maybe it makes you remember who you are. I definitely feel that's true of *The Endless Forest*, where you go there and yeah, you're a deer, but you're in this joyful environment and communicating with people anyway, even though there's no words. So it's one example.

We Have Always Been Avatars, and Avatars Must Die

Alan Sondheim

This is an edited transcript of Alan Sondheim's presentation and discussion, in which he presented images from his work and discussed his themes and inspiration.

What I'm going to talk about is the idea that we've always been avatars, and avatars must die. It's dangerous to consider the virtual as a brave new world – the virtual has always been with us. I think there's much greater continuity between the past and the present than we want to recognize. The body has always been virtual, I think this is indicated by things like scars, tattoos, birthmarks – all of these things which carry a history in an almost digital form, they are present, they're on the body in a readable way, they're dependent on the body, the scars don't tend to go away.

I decided to show almost random things of my work, but not quite. I want to start with a project that was done thanks to Patrick Lichty at Columbia College in Chicago. It is an avatar moving across a space – but the avatar is highly distorted. This was done by altering motion capture equipment with real performers. There would be two to four performers moving a single avatar. The avatar actually represents a community of performers. The parts would be interacting in ways which would be inconceivable in real life, the performance avatar is doing things that no real avatar could do.

For me this is related to issues of wounding, issues of pain, issues of
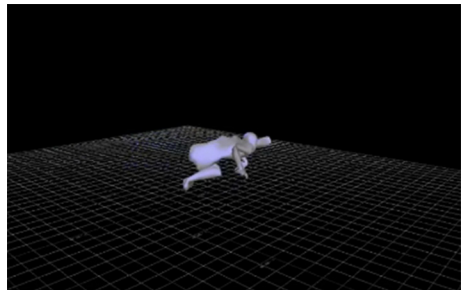
Screengrab of Second Life avatar moved by dancers using motion capture.

death, issues of involuntary action. The avatar: she or he is partly visible, partly invisible, and this changes constantly as the different invisibility textures come in front or in back of it. Their movements are also very very bizarre movements – they're not movements that an avatar would have in real life. The landscape in the back looks very denuded, all the objects have been taken out of it. That's the result of the textures I'm using – the objects are still there but they appear to be invisible.
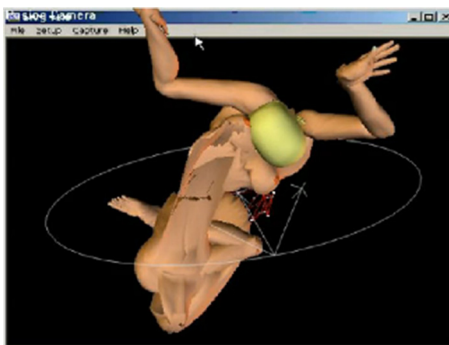
Screengrab of Second Life avatar moved by dancers using motion capture.

What happens is, you start with performers, the performers do something, then that's sent through motion capture mapping equipment which is either altered by altering the software, or altered by altering the mapping itself on the performers, so that you get distortions in the final product which can then be mapped in things like Poser (which is a mannequin program) or Blender (which is a 3D modeling program) or in Second Life (SL) itself, which I'm much more interested in, because in SL you have the ability to create for an international audience that can even watch you in the act.

Issues I'm interested in very strongly are issues of pain and suffering and death. The interior of the avatar has got scars on it, it has tattoos on it, and there's a marking of the interior of the body as well as the exterior. I'm fascinated by avatar interiors in things like Poser, in Blender, when you play with Blender and create them from scratch, or in SL, when you have avatars you can go into the interior of. I once worked in a virtual world where I built an entire piece inside a mountain and you had to find a way to get into the mountain. There weren't any real ways to get in, but ways that you could sort of move the camera inside the mountain, inside the surface of it, where you could see a whole different world and nothing was on the outside.

Here is a photo of a veteran from world war one, photographed at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington. The veteran represents a highly distorted face, a wounded face – this is before reconstructive surgery was really able to take off. For me this is the image of slaughter that we have around the world now. It's too easy to escape into these fictional worlds, into digital worlds, into autonomous ideas of virtuality and ignore this kind of pain. So I used images like this in Facebook as my own identification at one point to bring attention to it. And I've also used these as textures in SL to bring attention to the kind of haunting that it represents. And again, this is common around the world today.

This image shows the idea of featureless or shapelessness; this was done in Washington DC, on the Potomac River which at this point is highly polluted and you can see little mountains of pollution. They're oddly beautiful but they're utterly dead and they're shapeless and they participate in what Kristeva calls the 'abject'[1] – they look like they're partial bodies, they're part bodies and they're part not-bodies, so

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1 See: Julia Kristeva, "Powers of Horror: an essay on abjection", in *European Perspectives*, a series of the Colombia University Press, 1982. Translated by Leon S. Roudiez.

they're a mixture of things that make us uncomfortable looking at it, like shit, like faeces – things that are within us and without us; the idea of disgust is related to that.

Here we see a slime mould. A slime mould is a member of the fungi family. The fungi kingdom was broken off from the animal and plant kingdoms. The fungi are closer related to animals, and this actually is a kind of fungi animal – this is mobile. These are made out of amoebas – this is photographed in Brooklyn where I live – these are communal amoebas that come together to form fruiting bodies that release spores and then can disperse again. The liquid around, the stain around the outside edges, that looks like water is, I believe – I didn't have a microscope with me at the time – is streaming amoeba coming into the central core. Again, this is shapeless but it's still very much alive.

Pollution on the Potomac River, Washington DC. Photographer: Alan Sondheim.

As you bring the idea of the 'abject' into SL, you begin to develop peculiar architectures. Abject architectures are architectures of disgust or confusion. Architectures which make it almost impossible to negotiate or go into the space properly. You notice there's also some sexual images in there, so it's a combination of everything.

My dream or image of what the virtual's supposed to be, has a kind of eternal smooth surfaces, surfaces like the screen itself, with a little bit of corruption that's exciting beneath. In fact I think it's the corruption that is really what determines or characterises the digital. The digital decays just as much as the analogue does. It decays because the only way you can look at the digital is through analogue formatting.

What I'm saying with all of this is that the virtual and the real are interpenetrated. That the body is always virtual, that the worlds we live in are virtual, that the symbolic is virtual, that the real itself, the real world is what Clement Rosset calls 'idiotic',[2] it can also be called the practico-inert from Sartre,[3] it's an inert world, it's a dead world, it's a world that's substance, it's a world that just is. So as soon as you start speaking about the world you start implying symbolic systems, and as soon as you do that you start entering into virtual worlds. I believe personally that both virtuality and the idea of culture go all the way down to the level of amoeba. Amoebas have been shown to be able to learn and they have retention. They have

Screengrab of Second Life avatar moved by dancers using motion capture.

2 Clement Rosset, Le Réel : *Traité de l'idiotie*, Paris, Éditions de Minuit (1977).
3 See: Jean Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Volume One, Verso (2004).

memory somehow within the molecular structure. So it goes all the way down. Culture is not just something that's human, the virtual isn't just something that's human.

My avatars are so distorted that they start to look like slime moulds. The fingers out of it you can see, the knee coming out of it – so parts of the body look real, parts look artificial. When I work with Foofwa, the dancer, we work a lot with taking things from the real world, remodeling them in virtual worlds like in SL or through motion capture, then taking those and Foofwa or other dancers imitate them and do live performances.

This image represents dance in a girly picture from a 19th century Pierre Louÿs novel.[4] On the left is a dancer and on the right is one of the more modern avatars that I've been working with.

We're always avatars, avatars must die, we have to learn how to accept our own death, we have to learn how to embody death, pain and suffering in the virtual beyond just signing petitions and making ourselves feel good when we did that.

Screengrab from Second Life showing distorted avatars in front of an illustration from a 19th century Pierre Louÿs novel.

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4 See: Pierre Louÿs, *Aphrodite* (1896).

Moved by the world

Excerpts from the audience discussion following Alan Sondheim's presentation; AS is Alan Sondheim and HVJ is Helen Varley Jamieson (discussion facilitator).

HVJ: We've now got 7 minutes for questions before we go to Mem's presentation. The first one we have is from James: "can you explain how players are enacting influence over the movement of the avatar in this first piece?"

AS: Sure. That particular one was done in Chicago at a motion capture lab, and I used between 2 and 4 dancers, in the real world. The dancers would move in different ways, and each of the dancers would wear a part of an avatar outfit. So one dancer might be moving the head, another dancer might be moving the left side of the body, another might be moving the right and another might be moving the legs. If the dancers move like this - let's see if i can get this [demonstrating with hands] – these are the dancers, and they start twisting like this, they're moving against each other, like this. Because they're all mapped onto a single body, the only thing that the body can do is, turn in, it can involute, it can turn inside of itself. Or it can break down, the software can crash, which happened a lot when we were doing this. But if the software didn't crash, what you get are very distorted figures. In West Virginia we did it another way, we had the dancers moving normally and what they were doing was being sent to a computer. In order to change the image behaviour, we went into the BVH files – the biovision hierarchy files – into the software itself. So as the dancer was moving, the files themselves would become distorted. We operated on the level of files instead of the level of the mapping. It was a lot of fun, I mean people were laughing through it all, we had corny music going.

HVJ: Great. OK, we have another question, and this is from Maria X. She would like to hear more about embodying pain and suffering in virtual worlds and environments, and how this can go beyond representation?

AS: Very briefly, because this is the discussion of Empyre this month – the Empyre mailing list – and we've got maybe a hundred pages that are dealing with this. But very briefly, studies have shown that obscene words like fuck or cunt or shit, words that are considered obscene, are processed differently in the brain than ordinary words like I'm using now. They actually go through different channels, they call up different reactions directly, they short circuit in the brain. Things like representations – pornography online – has very visceral reactions. So I think the reactions to abject pain can be used – even though it's just texture mapping, it's just pixels. Instead of using all of these drawings that people do when they're in SL and these goofy cartoon-like characters, I try to use characters that are carrying signs of the real world – pain or sexuality or something in the real world that will elicit a response that's less under control. So that's one thing that can be done. And the other thing that can be done is working with long forms. Just as you can get involved with a long novel, like *Sophie's Choice*, to pick an old one, that can leave you absolutely harrowed at the end, and worn out, and shaking – I think you can do that in SL and in virtual worlds, but not through short performances. In the real world you don't have control over slaughter, not really. You have control over petitions and things but

you don't really have control over slaughter. You don't have control over your own death, you're going to die. I think that the control you get with hyperlinks or clicks and things like that gives you a very false sense of power within the world. I like actually to be put into a world where I'm uncomfortably moved by that world and moved within that world, and I think by being there you can also bring home things that you can't otherwise. I mean there's exceptions to all of this, I'm not trying to generalise.

HVJ: Yes, of course. I think we have time for one last question ... Isabel is asking, "do you relate the distortion with the suffering?"

AS: Yes. I do relate it to it and it makes me uncomfortable looking at some of these images.

More/Less Than a Cyberfession: a Few Theoretical Short-(cir)cu(i)ts from *Learn to Hear Through the Lies of your Eyes*[1]

Miljana Perić

This is the edited text of Miljana Perić's performative presentation, delivered as a cyberformance in the UpStage platform; explanatory footnotes have been added.

The script

The first day in UpStage[2] I found my new theme. A theme for what? As a student of Theory of Arts and Media,[3] I had been given a task to choose a subject and write a paper related to internet art. During a pause from endless surfing through the sea of web pages connected to digital-, cyber-, networked-, net-based, web-art

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1 The performance *Learn to Hear Through the Lies of Your Eyes: The Cyberforming Hybridization of Tuxedomoon* was devised by Miljana Perić, Teodora Perić, Ana Marković, and presented at the 070707 UpStage Festival from Rex Cultural Centre in Belgrade. See: http://upstage.org.nz/blog/?page_id=51#tuxedo (accessed August 5, 2013).
2 UpStage, www.upstage.org.nz/ (accessed August 5, 2013).
3 A department in the Interdisciplinary Studies of the University of Arts in Belgrade, Serbia. See: www.arts.bg.ac.rs/rektoraten/stud/?id=studoblasti#teorija (accessed August 5, 2013).

projects, I remembered that the cyberformance group Avatar Body *Collision*[4] had given a performance in Belgrade a few months ago (it was in autumn 2004). Helen Varley Jamieson was on stage of Rex Cultural Centre,[5] and the rest of Avatar Body *Collision* were performing online, visible on a big projection screen behind her. The audience in Rex's big hall followed their manipulating with both parts of the cyberstage: physical and virtual. That cyberstaged performance was a process of simultaneously dealing with both venues: the traditional theater/performance art scene, on one side, and the digitally synthesized scene-on-screen, on another.

At one moment, Jamieson's performance became quite disturbing: she was balancing her laptop on her head like it was an old book! A thousand question and exclamation marks showed up in my head: "What is she doing? This is crazy! Where she thinks she is? Who does she think we are?! Some billionaires (in post-socialist, post-civilwar, post-bombing, post-/ex-Yugoslavia)?! To play with a laptop like that! All this is absurd! What is this performance about, anyway? About some rich kids from around the First World who can afford to play-and-break their expensive toys?!" These thoughts were passing through my head again, as I waited for an UpStage web page to display on my computer screen. Loading of the homepage was fast (if the word 'fast' can be used in the same sentence as 'dial-up' and 'internet-connection'), but the cyber-stage was loading, loading and loading,[6] and I didn't want to give up my newly found research subject.

I am not sure how long I had had to stare at the splash message: "Hello audience! Welcome to UpStage!", but it was long enough to host a variety of contemplative moods. In fact, that was good, because the net-art-topic of the paper had to be somehow problematized: theoretically and critically re-viewed. The troop/tropes of thoughts which had started with: "Finally! I have found a great thematic for the paper!", after a while became directed toward some problematic/al economy related issues/: "Someone crashes laptops in the name of new, 'young' art, as a creative metaphor and symbolic act, and another will crash a computer just because the poor machine is few years 'older', and, so, a bit slower." While I was wondering if my computer would succeed to load the web stage that day, or the next one, or ever, the feeling "Am I really welcome (t)here?" encompassed me.

"Is not hospitality an interruption of the self?"[7] Derrida's question was echoing in my impatient body. And, whose 'self' was in question? My-self? Or some of the

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4 Avatar Body *Collision*, a globally distributed, collaborative performance group who use free Internet chat room technologies to perform live across multiple stages and screens. www.avatarbodycollision.org (accessed August 5, 2013).

5 Venue for contemporary and experimental art in Belgrade, Serbia. www.rex.b92.net (accessed August 5, 2013).

6 Those moments would have been less stressful if I had examined the UpStage Manual previously. There it is nicely explained that "a broadband internet connection will give the best performance, but UpStage performs surprisingly well over dial-up. The main disadvantage when using dial-up is that the load time for each stage is longer. You may need to allow up to 15 minutes to load a stage, depending on how many graphics are on it. Once it's loaded, the real-time interaction and overall performance of UpStage is not much slower on dial-up than on broadband." H. V. Jamieson, "Technical Information", UpStage V2.4.2 User Manual, 2012. http://en.flossmanuals.net/upstage-v242-user-manual/technical-information/ (accessed August 5, 2013).

7 Jacques Derrida, "A Word of Welcome", in *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 51.

Screengrab from More/Less Than a Cyberfession*, October 12 2012.*

selves of the UpStage: as an artistic platform, a software application, host server, or the programmers or artists involved? Now, at the moment when the new UpStage software version 2.4.2[8] awaits for its first official public show(ing), it looks like, logically speaking, it could not be wrong to talk about a new-version-of-anything as an improved self? But instead of examining the possibility of cyberstage 'subjectivity', my story leads to some other cyber-figuration.

The first day in UpStage, I also found my new team. Following an ongoing fashion in the art world, which is especially present in a cyber-art world, I had to achieve one more thing to become fully equipped for writing of the paper. This was to reach the position of artist-as-researcher. Or, as Graeme Sullivan named it in his book *Art Practice as Research*, an "artist-theorist".[9] But instead of the proposed 'artist–theorist' formula, which looked like it is calling for some kind of subtraction (artist – theorist = minus for art and for theory), I preferred to have both of them in my working team, that is: 'artist+theorist'.

> It's gonna pay off later – it's a logical end; all the signs are pointing to it. Everything's turning to red and you see blue, so that's why you like it up here. I wanna be blind.
> When everything you want is not the way you want it – you're on the right track, sit back, hold tight. I was thinking. Then I stopped.[10]

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8 UpStage v2.4.2 was launched on October 12 2012.

9 Graeme Sullivan, *Art Practice as Research: Inquiry in the Visual Arts*, (SAGE Publications Inc, 2005).

10 Lyrics from Tuxedomoon's song *Blind*, from the EP *Tales From the New World*, (Music Box - Greece, 1984).

From the first day on the UpStage.org.nz cyberstage, we had stopped to think as before. We started with acting. Oui,[11] real acting!

Are you wondering who 'we' were? Artist and theorist, of course. As a student in the first year of Theory of Arts studies, I did not consider myself a real theoretician, that is, completely formed and competent. Only a small part of the competencies were mine at that moment. So, I had taken that 'part', and started acting. The other person was an artist, but also not a real one: she was of that cyber-kind. I met her on UpStage. In many ways she was similar to me, but in others very different. We started with our 'acting' thanks to mutual attractions and distractions. But not only thanks to that: in order to write my paper, I needed someone who could introduce me to the whole thing, someone who could show me how the cyberstaged art mechanism works 'from the inside'. I did not want to act like a blind person. The syntagma 'like-a-blind-person' is meant for 'theoreticians'[12] who can write a dozens of pages about a subject, without really looking at it first. Also, it is meant as an example in which, after a brief examination of a red painting, a theorist will elaborate about its blue side, and, eventually, close the whole case with the conclusion that the red painting is, 'actually', a blue one. Sometimes, that kind of surplus of produced, derived and/or added meanings in art theories can sound so nice and true-blue, but I wanted to act in some other way.

As Jamieson noticed in her *Adventures in Cyberformance*, "much of the current discourse and research methodologies are focused on the interpretation and critique of artistic practice rather than on the actual process of creation."[13] Maybe – too much. It was time to say "Enough!" to interpretations and critiques of red and blue, and to take in consideration all colours and shades of the cyberformance palette. I started with a detailed examination of not just some cyberformance, but from the very beginning of the whole creative process, of which the final part is performing a cyberformance. The right moment for starting the observation came in 2007. Well, I still know the exact date of it – February 21st 2007, because that was the day when Tuxedomoon[14] held a concert in Belgrade. Later that night, while I was still murmuring-singing "Live a thousand lives by picture ...",[15] my computer screen showed an e-mail from the UpStage crew. It was an invitation for participation in the first cyberformance festival in the UpStage platform, which would celebrate the

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11 Fr. oui (eng. yes) when pronounced sounds similar to english "we". This little word game points to a common practice in UpStage cyberformances: since verbal text is subject-to-change during performance, it is usual that performers and/or audience members add some free associations, homonyms, synonyms, double-meaningful, foreign or, maybe, just slip-tongue words and thoughts, or whatever they find is appropriate to the moment.

12 "The Greek theoria (θεωρία), from which the English word 'theory' is derived, means 'contemplation, speculation, a looking at, things looked at', from theorein (θεωρεῖν) 'to consider, speculate, look at', from theoros (θεωρός) 'spectator', from thea (θέα) 'a view' + horan (ὁρᾶν) 'to see'. It expressed the state of being a spectator." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theoria (accessed August 5, 2013).

13 Helen Varley Jamieson, *Adventures in Cyberformance: experiments at the interface of theatre and the internet*, MA Thesis, (Queensland University of Technology, 2008), 7.

14 Tuxedomoon is an experimental avant-garde, post-punk, New Wave group formed 1977 in San Francisco. http://tuxedomoon.co/ (accessed August 5, 2013).

15 Lyrics from Tuxedomoon's song *Desire* from the LP *Desire*, (USA: Ralph Rec., 1981).

Screengrab from More/Less Than a Cyberfession, *October 12 2012.*

launch of the 2.0 version of UpStage software.[16] I was delighted: "Finally! A new version of UpStage! With an improved sound feature! Now I can present my music through cyberformance!"

For the moment, I had forgotten about stories on art and theory, red and blue creations, my theoretical paper about practice-based-research ... I could not wait even for next morning, but immediately had called (and woken up) Teodora Perić, a singer, and Ana Marković, a passionate flute player. As a trio, we could make a few covers of Tuxedomoon songs (the group was celebrating its 30th birthday in 2007) and play them at the cyber-festival on the July 7th 2007. I would play keyboards, and do other sound production work. Everything was settled, and the only person I forgot to include in my plans was the cyberartist I met and with whom I had collaborated for the last two years. "Maybe it is not needed to make her bored with this project. After all, she is an experimental cyberartist, and we are planning to make some traditional tribute-concert." The word 'traditional' in the last sentence is meant to be 'music, music, and just music', that is, a well-known good old single-art discipline.

Shortly after I sent my proposition to the UpStage festival organising team, their reply destroyed my concept for the tribute. "Hello, thank you for your proposal, but the mp3 feature is not yet implemented in our software. Maybe in the next version of UpStage. Sorry." But I did not want to give up. "You started a tribute, and there will be a tribute! Even if we have to work with just the text-to-speech tool, I am sure there is a way!" Those were the exact words of my friend the cyberartist, to whom I complained about no-music impossibilities of UpStage v.2.0.[17]

The experiment started, and also I could continue my research for my paper from the closest sight ever, because the cyberartist was spending almost every day with me during the next few months on the cyberstage. I carefully observed her

16 The 070707 UpStage Festival was held on 7 July 2007; http://upstage.org.nz/blog/?page_id=48 (accessed August 5, 2013).

17 The ability to play prerecorded audio files in UpStage was implemented in early 2008, and in 2013 live audio-visual streaming was added.

experimenting with text-to- speech 'music': compiling, combining and repeating lyrics; compiling, combining and repeating words; compiling, combining and repeating letters, vowels, rhymes, exclamations, cries, sighs ... that was her creative methodology. At first, there was a plan for making music performance from text-to-speech generated sounds, but after some time spent in playing, practising and experimenting (well, to be precise, after the first telephone bill which had clearly detected a dial-up-connection-caused blockade) the initial plan had been intertextually broadened: she applied the same method to visual things, and to other kinds of texts. Free compiling, combining, cutting and pasting of various materials, with three open source softwares: OpenOffice,[18] GIMP[19] and Audacity[20] – that is the shortest explanation of her technical practice. She was calling that: found images, found sounds, found sentences, found words, found art. In a manner of speaking, she was telling everything by saying nothing.[21]

"But what about copyrights?", I was asking. "What?!", she replied, "As a theoretician you should know very well that everyone is allowed to quote. If you copy to your work up to 5% of any other work, it will be considered as a quote, not plagiarizing." Well, it was not my role to act as a judge, but to observe how and what the cyberartisan was doing. I really wanted to be somehow less objective, and more in a mood of absorbing the subject, instead of inter-pretending it. According to how John O'Toole explained the situation in *Doing Drama Research*, for whom this re-searching process "explicitly differentiates between the research goals of the artist and those of the academic researcher, asserting that the aims of the former are more subjective than those of the latter",[22] for me it was important to overcome such an academic distancing, and to come as near to the cyberformance field as possible.

The last but not least issue in my rapprochement was the position of the audience in relation to the cyberformance. Incorporating the spectator into the cyberstaged spectacle was the process which I was looking for. My working title was: *A Participative Cyberforming*. It was close to the concept of interactive improvisation, since "verbal scenery and improvisation are key components of online performances, which depend in large part, if not entirely, on text."[23] Through the chat-box, which is visible/usable on the right side of the screen, the linguistic part of an UpStage cyberformance is subject to change during the event, as it is equally available to both performers and audience. As I had heard from another UpStage cyberformer, "it actually turned out that the most important medium for us was the dialogue box, where each of us could be present in word form. The word is

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18 See: http://www.openoffice.org (accessed August 5, 2013).
19 See: http://www.gimp.org (accessed August 5, 2013).
20 See: http://audacity.sourceforge.net/ (accessed August 5, 2013).
21 Lyrics from Tuxedomoon's song *In a Manner of Speaking* from the LP *Holy Wars*, (Belgium: Cramboy, 1985).
22 John O'Toole, *Doing drama research: stepping into enquiry in drama, theatre and education*, (City East, Qld.: Drama Australia, 2006), quoted in Helen Varley Jamieson, *Adventures in Cyberformance*, 10.
23 Toni Sant, Kim Flintoff, "The Internet as a Dramatic Medium", a supplementary article to Adam Blatner (ed), *Interactive and Improvisational Drama:Varieties of Applied Theatre and Performance*, (New York: iUniverse – Inc, 2007), www.interactiveimprov.com/onlinedr.html (accessed August 5, 2013).

Screengrab from More/Less Than a Cyberfession*, October 12 2012.*

my body as I enter into the screen."[24] Audience, do you have something to confess and express?

> I have got to build a new machine. I am tired of what is on your screen.
> I have got to build a new machine. I am tired of what is on your scene.[25]

One question remained. The cyberartist I was talking about, whom I had met on UpStage in 2005, who was that? Well, she repeated her motto so many times during our collaboration: "Anonyme is best! Anonyme is best."[26] It would be a real pity to reveal her identity now, and to drop all these seven years in one night (or in one evening, in one morning, depending what is your current time-zone).[27] Also, I do not want to even mention our ongoing struggles, at the very moment when it is pretty obvious that she is using much more than 5% of my hard theoretical work for her cyberformance.[28] As is already said, I am not here as a judge, I am just an observer. And you ?

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24 Željko Hrs, "The Virtual Gym", Anna Furse, *Don Juan.Who?*, 2007, www.athletesoftheheart.org/images/DonJuanWho.pdf (accessed August 5, 2013).
25 Lyrics from Tuxedomoon's song *New Machine*, from 12" *No Tears*, (USA: Time Release Rec., 1978).
26 Lyrics from Tuxedomoon song *L'etranger (Gigue existentielle)* from 12" *Suite en sous-sol*, (Italy: Italian Rec., 1982).
27 UpStage cyberformances are performed in real time from one or more spaces which can be situated in same or different time zones, for the audience who can be in different or even same place but with various personal clock settings.
28 "Cyberformers often work with the dual identities afforded by avatars, exploiting the gap between online persona and offline self." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyberformance (accessed August 5, 2013).
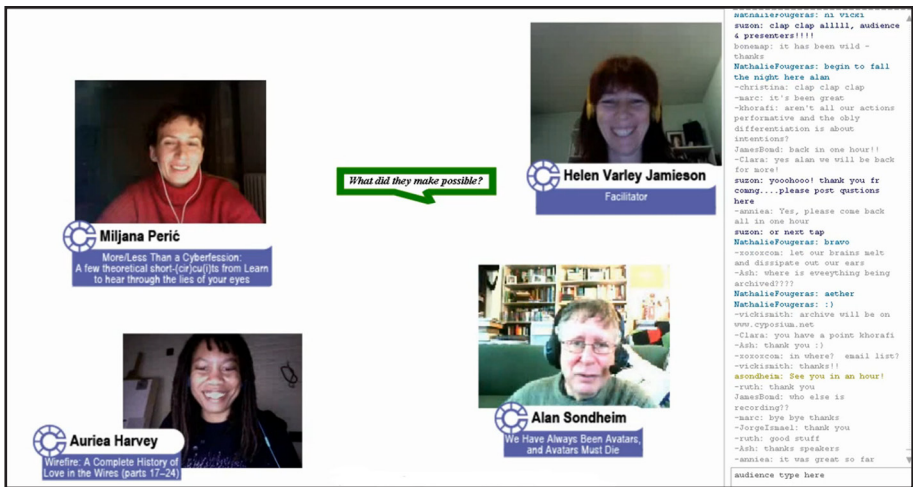
Oh Why Doesn't the Social Web Look and Feel More Like This Now!

Discussion, Block 1

During the Wirefire *presentation, Ruth Catlow asked in the text chat: "Oh why doesn't the social web look and feel more like this now!" This comment was picked up on in the discussion at the end of the first block of presentations of the CyPosium, with Auriea Harvey (AH), Alan Sondheim (AS) and Miljana Perić (MP), facilitated by Helen Varley Jamieson (HVJ), and continued into what the future might look like.*

AH: The social web doesn't look and feel like that because it's hard to use I think, because now the web is for so-called 'everybody' and before it was for specialists, in a way, like you had to know your computer in a way that people don't know their computers now. Facebook people just know their computers for Facebook, email, maybe, but Facebook is kind of the web now, so it's like one – yes, people don't use their computers, I'd say, that's why it doesn't look that way; aesthetics attached to the use of the machine.

AS: I don't think that's true at all. I was at Eyebeam Art and Technology Centre and there are people designing all sorts of platforms, interactive platforms, that are building on all of this work. I do think that with that and with the maker revolution and the Makerbot revolution, sure, most people are going to use Facebook or Twitter, but there is an awful lot of independent software being built at this point. I'm sort of excited, although I can't afford it, about the use of apps in the mobile web because I think there again there's all sorts of developments in making art there. There are a lot of dancers working with mobile apps that you can use on your iPhone. So I'm not sure that that's true. I sort of miss the simple days of HTML one or two or three, but

that's cos that was all I knew, but I think there are people doing terrific things now that are building on this older work.

AH: I think once again that's getting into specialist interaction now ... what you're talking about is not for the mass of people. What happened is a mass of people showed up online, and suddenly everyone was building for the mass of people. Once the 'Makerbot revolution' actually happens, you'll get people printing out everything, you know, 3D printers in their house, and it will be a very different thing than what you're seeing right now. I don't like to be doom and gloom and cynical but it will probably squash all this creativity that you're seeing in that field right now. If my past experience has shown anything, then I'm probably right to be cynical about it.

AS: I'm generally a pessimist, particularly when it comes to American elections, but with this I'm optimistic.

AH: Alright, we'll see. (laughter)

HVJ: Mem, do you want to make any comment about that, in relation to how web 2.0 has changed?

MP: For some people it's not such a big change, I mean in technical ways. In Serbia, I think that I am a bit late in many technical possibilities. As I mentioned in my presentation, I don't have that software, I didn't buy Flash, I'm just using open source platforms, free softwares and something like this. And in that way it isn't so much change for me. But I know that in countries with elections in the next period, it's a hot topic. But for me, I'm ok, because it's seven years since I entered for the first time in this internet arena. I worked with Gimp and today I'm also working with it. So, from that position, I can say that it's not a big change. Also Facebook, Twitter or something, I don't use. I have some accounts, but it's not interesting, every day to spend – it's not my type of life. I was one of the first in Serbia, in 2006 I think, that was in Facebook, and then I quit.

HVJ: I think it's interesting to talk about the "mass" compared to the other things that are happening that are less visible, and that's one of the reasons why we're here now, to ensure the visibility of these things that are happening outside of the mass. Because one of the things about web 2.0 is that it's just so enormous, and it consumes all our time, and it kind of takes over so much, that for the makers and creators we have to work harder to carve out this space for us.

AS: There's more people online now. I remember when we were doing MOO performances and hardly anybody would show up, and now there's so many people online, there's over a billion on Facebook alone, so there's so many people online now that you can find your audiences I think, easier than it was in the past, if that's what you want to do.

AH: That's why we got involved with making video games, because we wanted a larger audience, we wanted to bring similar ideas that are brought up

in performances like this, in cyberformance, but we wanted it to reach a lot more people. So we used the same principles and infiltrated a different arena, you might say. We get our games downloaded by thousands of people, it's a sort of stealth art practice. People who are involved or who have been to our performances in *The Endless Forest*, get an experience they didn't expect from the game, so to speak.

HVJ: Do you know how many people watched *Wirefire*? You say you wanted to reach a bigger audience ...

AH: We weren't even paying attention (laughs) but over the course of the years it was probably in the hundreds. But our video games, it's in the thousands; it's a degree of magnitude greater, the people that we're reaching, simply by changing the packaging around the medium you might say, around the media. But it's still the same stuff, which is all I wanted to point out by my presentation – *The Endless Forest* is *Wirefire*, it's just a different skin so to speak.

HVJ: A question is from Clara: "What future do you see for the kind of performance that you develop?"

MP: Well, I hope the same as it was – not less, but at least the same, or maybe … same chaos, I mean until it stays … to give impression that is chaotic and violent and something, I prefer to stay like that. That is my vision for it.

AS: I'm interested in things like Occupy Wall Street, which was a local movement here at one point, and the idea of temporary autonomous zones, TAZ, Hakim Bey's idea that you can perform anywhere, you can use available technology, you can perform outside or you could perform online in a high tech environment. So I see the future as, unfortunately for me, as exactly the past, just trying to fill what spaces I can, because I don't belong in any institution, I'm not connected with a university or a group. Everything I do unfortunately is generated out of the house here, with no help, so I'm very limited. When someone like Patrick Lichty invites me a place, then it's an explosion – I can work with the motion capture equipment, I have these switches, but they only last a short period of time. So as a friend of mine said a long time ago, it's just dancing on Mean Street – tap-dancing on Mean Street, and hoping something comes out of it.

AH: We'll still continue to build experiences, they'll evolve in ways I probably can't even predict at this moment. But *The Endless Forest* has been online since 2005 and it continues. Someone asked, "what about the liveliness?" The live event, I assume they mean in that. I don't actually know. To me, this cyberformance thing is something that we did in the past, and now we've evolved it into a new arena where we're collaborating still with the audience, on the types of experiences that we want to make, so yeah, I can't even answer that question concisely, actually.

HVJ: (laughs) It's very hard to see into the future, isn't it?

AH: Yeah, exactly.

Do you think the concept of liveness by Auslander is still relevant for today's cyberperformance? How do you think having a globally dispersed audience as opposed to local and co-present is significant? How about asynchronous presence, as in watching a recorded performance? Maria, could current work like that which Rob Wittig does around 'Netprov' (view later https://vimeo.com/46441184) be seen as extending cyberperformance via ARG, ETC into a type of cyberperformace 2.0? How does it feel presenting a paper to a virtual audience rather than a physically present one? Would you then call an asynchronous act like a telephone call a performance? Can we 'name' subversive now almost any performance, which does not imply or relate to media technology, which is not 'reflexive' towards the media (any kind...?) – Where is the borderline between conventional and subversive though? How is a phone call asynchronous? Should we fear that big corporations and economic groups appropriate of this kind of expression for commercial purposes, in this new age where this kind of technologies becomes common? Do social media preclude intimacy? How different are your ideas compared to your earlier net art projects, now that you create games? Why can't the social web look and feel more like the world of entropy8zuper now? sensual, intimate, textured, surprising, loving? In web 2.0 there is so much interaction, that we have learned to play our roles, and avoid the intimacy that perhaps came with trying to develop contact in the naive and primitive days of 'web 1.0'. Or am I wrong? I would like to hear more about embodying pain and suffering in virtual worlds/environments – how can this go beyond representation? Alan, do you consider all your activity being performance? Is wildness & being feral, about exploring beyond 'imposed' socialised structures – whatever the medium you use? Do you relate the distortion with the suffering? Lots of references opposing anthropocentrism – is what you are doing de-evloution? Alan do you know of Butoh or think this work you showing inhuman moves with Butoh? Oh why doesn't the social web look and feel more like this now? I'd like to hear from any of the three about how they see their work connected to the other two performers, and what that might say about cyberperformance in general. – Is the work we have witnessed contemporary art, if so in what way? Is the internet being more and more controlled and restricted by governments? All of the performances seemed to have an element of the 'personal' – i'm interested in how this may or may not relate to more general political concerns, whether they are being addressed at all, or whether they are not being addressed. – Should we finally see in production extinction and in extinction production? I am wondering that if all works by Mem, Aureia & Alan, have a strong link to wildness & being feral? How interactive are your works? What do you think Stephen is most accurate, effective? Do you think that MUDS & MOOS are really like collaboratively authored novels? But it seems to me people get similarly absorbed in virtual spaces like say World of Warcraft or Second Life... but you're saying there's maybe something more accessible or immediate about the 'simpler' text world? Does something that you absolutely don't understand stimulate imagination? Does the brain have a gender? What does it mean if your brain is a space opera? good/bad? Simulate or stimulate? Did you have public Stephen, when you were doing netseduction did you take them in account? Or is not important/ Are the public the players? Question to Stephen: have you updated your categories of digital performance from 2007? But it's possible that's cyberformance made by bots will *simulate* imagination and that we won't understand what happen and so ... it will *stimulate* our human imagination. What do you think about this Stephen? Do you position yourself in the Virtuality Continuum http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mixed_reality , and if yes, where? Why do you feel the need to turn your digital avatars into analogue sculptures? How were you moved by your presence in second live as Gandi? How do you respond emotionally with your own work in the journalistic news cycle – as you have experienced it? It's interesting that an action like

this online is performance art, but offline it's activism. Is there some inherent distinction? I wonder if online/virtual activism will one day be as tightly regulated by governments (think OWS) as offline? But will that always be the case? if society becomes increasingly online? nude avatars? That's insane. Although it does say something interesting about our connection to digital representations of ourselves. Would anyone like to venture a definition / distinction between the terms telematic performance and networked performance? Adriene is the first presenter to use the term 'telematic' is this word still relevant to cyberformance? I would like to know whether the speaker sees her online performance/activism as a replacement for offline activism, or whether she engages in both equally. - Questions to Joseph: is that kind of embodiment (Ghandi) the future of cyberformance? Is not text and telematic performance going to get outdated with more embodied performance with avatars and more developed interfaces that allow more e-mbodiment? How can you truly talk across borders when the language used is English? Could the work ever be without text, purely visual and appeal across language barriers like silent cinema? Don't you think it is time to leave the boxed interface of mouse/screen and use our body to perform? Is there something very specific for online performances what distinguish it from real life performance – how does your body react differently to it?, your brain? Joseph – we are a euro-american cohort – what are your impressions of ethnicity after the ghandi avatar? Did you write your performance before playing it? Can you discuss the importance of audience in your performance - You said you met on Skype at first but I think I missed what actually brought you together as a group? How it looks to you now? Would you restage it on the Tap? The work has a strong linear narrative – is this to facilitate the technology or a creative decision? Your audience were durational they were with you for the entire process of the development of the story right? This event is heavily anglosaxon-dominated, what happened to the rest of the universe? Roger Mills, do you also have any women artists in your lecture? Other than the fact that these musicians are in different places, what difference does this make musically except for slight lag with tabla? Do you have much rehearsals, or is more impro way? On one hand this shows the power of the internet to shrink space, but what of including possibilities that include the net itself – sonifications of code, more interaction from an audience? What potential does the internet itself have to add something to the musical collaboration? Imagine if avatars could play code; protocols. - About rehearsals! do you play just for the organised 'events', or you can spontaneously meet and play like in ordinary environment? What about lag? - it seems that one can only really improvise when the perceived tempo is elastic - so i imagine strings work better than percussion? What about bandwidth? What kinds of intimacy is that you get collaborating with others with music, in a network context? What application does Roger use? Could you also ask how feminism figures in the work? What is the largest collaboration that transmission has ever pursued (in terms of people involved) I want to know whether online audiences usually develop a sort of a 'team' relationship? Which specific challenges did you have because of the 2 different audiences onsite & online? Is it important that it is deconstructed, dispersed & networked - as in not like a single element as tv etc...? We are here to make you accept that you are manipulated: you understand? Is the audience your medium? Can someone speak about how they feel drive by the network? Will your performance replace air travel? We talk about the past because the cyposium has been introduced in a historical context – who are the 'pioneers' and 'colonizers' of cyberformance? Don't we live in the past? Does time exist in cyberspace? But where is here? I don't understand – if we invite an audience into our spaces don't they become a part of the work? The public is where in this contract? What are you doing in the bush? Does your work also challenge the concept of genius?
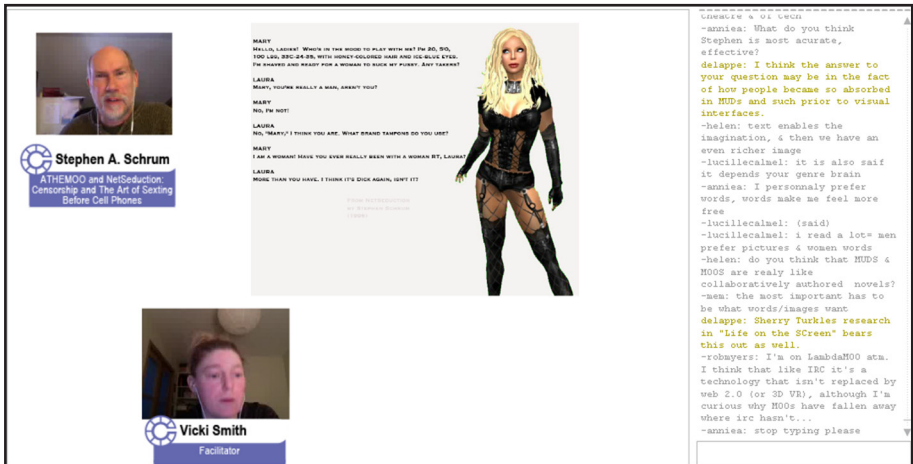
ATHEMOO and NetSeduction: Censorship and the Art of Sexting Before Cell Phones

Stephen A. Schrum

In his presentation, Stephen A. Schrum delivered a short text as a provocation for a discussion; here is a transcript of this, followed by excerpts from the discussion.

I have an overview of the topic. It's a bit brief because I am really most interested in sparking a discussion on the questions I'll be asking at the very end, and I hope there will be a lively give and take. Before I begin, here is the link to the text of the play in question: http://musofyr.com/NetSed/NetSedDraft2.pdf

So imagine my surprise about a year ago when someone contacts me and asks if I would mind if portions of the text of *NetSeduction* be used for a new performance. I wrote the play 16 years ago, and for me it was an experiment, and a bit of a throwaway; I didn't expect it to have any longevity. Yet even a casual Google search turns up a variety of academic references and, as it turns out, it sowed the seeds of one of my current research questions into the "Perception of Presence in Virtual Worlds." We are talking about a short play written in the 20th Century – and it is still having an impact today.

This presentation will involve examining *NetSeduction* from two perspectives. First, I'll be looking at it from an historical angle, the performances and the censorship that surrounded those first presentations. I will then turn to the larger question of the efficacy of text-based performance in light of more recent developments in both society and technology. Does this work still have power today, and if so, why? And has the power of words been supplanted or usurped by a graphical world?

We begin in the early world of net performances with what we might call "IRC, MUDs and MOOs, oh my!" The Hamnet players' 1993 production of *Hamnet*[1] conducted on Internet Relay Chat was the starting point for online performance. MUDs, or Multi-User Dimensions or Dungeons, and MOOs (MUDs utilizing object-oriented programming),[2] while having been around for a few years with 'Dungeons and Dragons' type games on university mainframes, began to break through the public consciousness. More 'famous' MOOs, such as MIT's MediaMOO created by Amy Bruckman in 1993,[3] and the Association of Theatre in Higher Education's ATHEMOO,[4] created at the request of Juli Burk, appeared at this time. The latter hosted several performances in the 1990s, including the recreation of the Samsa house in *MetaMOOphosis*, Twyla Mitchell-Shiner's *A Place for Souls*, and my own *NetSeduction* in 1996.

NetSeduction began with my own experience with a site called BananaChat,[5] where you could go to a private 'room' for a one-on-one conversation, or hang out on the Balcony and listen in on all conversations, including all those in private rooms. As you might imagine, some of these conversations could become quite spicy. My thoughts about the perception of presence in virtual worlds began here, as I encountered people who accepted the idea of talking to real people in an online chat environment.

In BananaChat, while being constantly aware of people in public or intimate conversations, it occurred to me that online chat was a form of theatre. The adoption of handles or character names, the use of emotes (such as one woman responding with 'bubbling laughter'), and engaging in intense dialogues with others – all of these aspects served as parts of a constant, large-scale performance. Coupled with the realization that none of these people might necessarily be who they say they were, I found this brave new online world a fertile ground in which to germinate a new play.

Rather than go into any great details on *NetSeduction*, I will just give a general overview. Visitors would enter 'The Adult Arena' and receive a warning: "If you are offended by sexually explicit material, or are under the age of 18, please disconnect now. Otherwise, choose enter." The chatroom itself, named NetSeduction, led to other 'private rooms', such as The SexFree Café, The Dungeon, The Men's Room, and Women Only Chat Room. The performance featured the Actors of the piece, who would copy and paste their lines of dialogue. There were also Supers, Chatbots (such as Lola, inspired by the Kinks' song) who would respond to certain typed phrases, and Lurkers, the audience members who would watch the performance. As it played out, two of our lurkers became actors when they decided to slip off to one of the private rooms for some 'interaction' of their own. The programming supplied

1 Hamnet Players official web site: www.hambule.co.uk/hamnet/ (accessed August 13, 2013).
2 Multi User Dungeon or Domain (MUD) and MUD Object Oriented (MOO) are multi-player online text chat and role-playing environments. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MUD (accessed August 19, 2013).
3 Amy Bruckman and Mitchel Resnick, "The MediaMOO Project: Constructionism and Professional Community" in *Convergence*, 1:1, Spring 1995. Online at http://llk.media.mit.edu/papers/convergence.html (accessed August 19, 2013).
4 Stephen A. Schrum, *Theatre in Cyberspace: Issues of Teaching, Acting and Directing* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1999).
5 Now defunct.

various atmospherics, such as "The driving music from *NetSeduction* changes to the Village People's Greatest Hits."[6]

The 'plot' of *NetSeduction* revolves around the sexual escapades of several characters. Allan and Jane are checking the place out, and are new visitors to the new landscape. A recurring figure is Dick, clearly a teenaged boy who is desperate to participate in adult fun and games. He eventually succeeds with a woman named Beth, who we can guess from the context is really John, who is a regular in the chatroom.

I recruited the actors, and we met in ATHEMOO to rehearse, mostly tech and timing issues. We then scheduled two public performances. However, at this time, what I would term censorship entered the picture. The administrator of ATHEMOO feared that the frank and explicit language of the piece might worry higher-ups in the organization. (More likely, they would not have noticed, since ATHEMOO had always been largely ignored by the majority of ATHE[7] – and in fact, technology has only become an issue for the organization over the last several years.) In any case, the performances were by invitation only, and audience members needed to be approved prior to each performance, to avoid any moral fallout. The two performances occurred with no moral outrage, and seemed to vanish into the annals of theatre history.

We now flash forward to the present, which one might describe as 'The Web Gone Wild.' Of course, there has always been pornography on the internet, but in recent years, with the widespread adoption of cellphones, we have seen what might be termed 'user-generated porn.' On websites such as Myspace and Facebook we see very revealing photographs of people that they themselves take and display. Over the last several years, the topic of sexting, sending sexually-oriented texts, has come in to the public's awareness. Of course, sexting is merely the contemporary equivalent of what was happening via webchat in the mid 1990s.

So imagine if I approached staging *NetSeduction* today. Having been in Second Life for six years and staged four theatrical productions within that 3D graphical environment, I would likely choose to do the play in Second Life. *NetSeduction* would be a club venue, with actual rooms off a main room. A disco ball would hang from the ceiling and visitors would hear actual music, not just read song titles to suggest what they would be hearing. The actors would not type or copy and paste but rather use voice to communicate (and hearing some of the *NetSeduction* lines rather than simply reading them: what a difference that would make!). And we would not read a description of the characters – we would see them in all their muscled and tattooed male or gravity-defying bosomy female shapes, with appropriate (or perhaps inappropriate) attire. Lurkers' avatars could dance as they watch, or become involved themselves in ball-hopping and pixel-bonking.

In doing so, I wonder what we would gain, and what we would lose. Rather than using charged terms and four (and five) letter words for genitalia, the genitalia would be on display for all to see. Is seeing a Second Life virtual penis mightier than seeing the word appear on a screen in the context of a sext? Have we become jaded to words, and do they no longer have the power they had when confined to books?

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6 Schrum, Stephen. *NetSeduction*. http://musofyr.com/NetSed/NetSedDraft2.pdf (accessed August 19, 2013).
7 This is the author's personal observation.

And with so much available in the virtual world, does the ubiquity of it all diminish its power?

I would now like to turn this over to a discussion with the audience, looking at these questions. They are: Which has primacy: the brain and imagination, and willing suspension of disbelief? Or a parade of blatant images? Is text more powerful? Can we say: "The Penis mightier than the sword"? Or are visual representations and animations of everything more effective?

I look forward to your responses and discussion.

Our responses and discussion

Following is an edited transcript of the discussion recording (left-hand column) and the audience chat (right-hand column), with time codes to indicate what was happening at the same time (minutes and seconds from the beginning of the presentation recording, which can be viewed in full at www.cyposium.net). SS is Stephen Schrum and Vicki Smith (VS) facilitated the discussion.

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[11.43]
xoxoxcom: my response is that the
images are types of symbols just
like text
[12.00]
asondheim: first I've done a lot
of ytalk and text seems much
more complex and motivating than
visuals
[12.20]
xoxoxcom: they only differ in
whatever type of conventional
semantics you may or may not get
out of them
asondheim: I wrote a lot about
this - the psychoanalytics of net
sex -
-robmyers: Oh the brain. And
images get in the way. Text can be
more intense...
asondheim: but it's a complex
collocation of drives that are
hard frankly to type in at the
moment
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SS: It really is all about willing suspension of disbelief, and this is one of the things I've been struggling with in the world of theatre. I go to my theatre conference every year, and I tell them that online theatre is theatre, and they tell me it's not, because there is a belief that you have to be in the same room with the performer and the audience. I don't think that's true.

[13.00]
SS: I think we tend to buy into the idea that we're there with other people, we're in a virtual world, wherever it may be, and so – there are those who will not be convinced, but our willing suspension of disbelief creates that world for us and we live in it.

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[13.00]
asondheim: there's also the
representations of the body in
net.sex - in ytalk
asondheim: one space is open for
the body of the other, the other
space open for the self - and you
can write and erase simultaneously
-helen: i agree - theatre happens
even without being in same space
-alberto: as
psyquiatrist,too,virtual life is
a reality,for many peoples,can do
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phantasy anonimous
asondheim: so that language
becomes motion and statement is
always already under erasure
-yann: depends on cognitive
capacity of the subject, maybe
-lucillecalmel: well, once i
experienced a kind of visual
striptease (body exposed fragment
by fragment, without seeing the
face) and it was really dense
suzon: i remembered theatre piece
in 70ies already where audience
were not in the same space
asondheim: the images are far too
cartoon-like
-helen: i think the imagination
has primacy
suzon: theatre du soleil, ariane
mnouchkine
-lucillecalmel: (even if i largely
prefer words, well manipulated
words,,, visual words)
-helen: when we see the images,
our imagination responds
xoxoxcom: who's to say you don't
get the same semantic "richness"
out of "images" vs "text" - or
more
-robmyers: :-)
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[15.13]
VS: 'Hugs and kisses' is saying "who's to
say you don't get the same semantic richness
out of images versus text or more?"

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[15.13]
-lucillecalmel: dealing with both
is quite common though
-helen: cyberformance has always
fallen betwen these 2 worlds - of
theatre & of tech
-anniea: What do you think Stephen
is most acurate,        effective?
delappe: I think the answer to
your question may be in the fact
of how people became so absorbed
in MUDs and such prior to visual
interfaces.
-helen: text enables the
imagination, & then we have an
even richer image
```

[15.59]
SS: I was intrigued about how we became
so involved in text-based virtual realities
like MUDs & MOOs – I had a student who
basically flunked out of school because he
was so involved in those. And that was his
entire world. And we thought, wow this is
really cool, that we can create, like novelists,
these interactive environments and texts.

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[15.59]
-lucillecalmel: it is also said it
depends your genre brain
-anniea: I personnaly prefer
words, words make me feel more
free
```

[16.20]
SS: And now suddenly we have a visual, this visual world in Second Life and other things, and I wonder sometimes if text has as much of an impact – on young people, for example. I'm teaching a social media class right now and I have some of the most technophobic students I've ever encountered, who don't like to read and don't like to interact with the iPads we've given them for the class. So I'm kind of in a swirl of trying to make sense of it all.

[16.56]
VS: So their interaction is by squeeze and swipe and flick rather than typing at all, or using words in any way?
SS: The use of graphics kind of diffused the need to read or the need to do deep thinking on things. We see this representation of this avatar that's on the screen right now – I don't need to describe her, I just see her.

How do I interact with this image, how do I present this image to people?

And of course, is this really a woman?

[17.40]
SS: Or is it a man somewhere who's dressed as a woman? There's all kinds of interesting layers there.

These students recently went in to Second Life and they were baffled by the fact that they were meeting up with real people.

[16.20]
-lucillecalmel: i read a lot = men prefer pictures & women words
-helen: do you think that MUDS & MOOS are realy like collaboratively authored novels?
-mem: the most important has to be what words/images want
delappe: Sherry Turkles research in "Life on the SCreen" bears this out as well.
-robmyers: I'm on LambdaMOO atm. I think that like IRC it's a technology that isn't replaced by web 2.0 (or 3D VR), although I'm curious why MOOs have fallen away where irc hasn't...
asondheim: the early visual worlds were much more powerful, CuSeeMe for example - I knew about the sex channels there -
-Clara: The brain has a genre???

[16.56]
xoxoxcom: but it seems to me people get similarly absorbed in virtual spaces like say World of Warcraft or Second Life... but you're saying there's maybe something more accessible or immediate about the "simpler" text world?
-alberto: could be, but you can imagine and feel with real world
-Greg: Regarding authenticity 'relatively high-integrity identity can be constructed by accumulating a collection of low integrity evidence.' (Jewkes, 2003:97). Jewkes, Y., (2003), Dot. cons, Cullompton, Wilan Publishing
-yann: text has something to do with language ... and i don't understand well english language... so , image are often more effective...
asondheim: what kind of graphics, there are photographs and there are artificial textures and they make all the diff in the world

[17.40]
-helen: sometimes i hate to see a film of a book i love, because it disrupts my own visual imagination of the story
-marischka: well for what it's worth, I've never seen anything in secondlife that equals my imagination when reading.

They said. is this all my class? and I said,
no they're people from all over the world.
And that kind of blew their minds, to see
this brave new world of online digital
technology.

[18.07]
VS: Helen's saying, "Do you think
that MOOs and MUDs are really like
collaboratively authored novels?" Is that your
impression of them?
SS: Virtual worlds are like illustrated
novels?
VS: Collaboratively authored novels. It's a
question from Helen.
SS: Virtual worlds, or text-based things?
VS: Um, MOOs and MUDs, she's replying
to you.

-helen: text environments
-helen: MUDs & MOOs
-helen: text based

[18.37]
SS: Actually, I think either one qualifies
as collaboratively created environments or
theatre pieces. There was one critic who
said that you can't have digital theatre or
cybertheatre in Second Life because it's all
role-playing anyway. It is, we're all creating
a virtual play all the time by being who we
are in the virtual world. Some of us are more
ourselves when we're there, and some of
us are very very different. So it's kind of an
interesting thing to suss out.

[18.37]
-lucillecalmel: asking herself if
she already have rewind some texts
to get an orgasm

-helen: a shared consensual
hallucination ... :)

-Clara: the new generations prefer
the visual to the text

[19.20]
SS: There's a play called *Tony and Tina's
Wedding* in the real world where you never
know who the wedding guests are and who
the people are who are paying for tickets
to see this production, and so that kind of
blurring, who's acting and who's real, is quite
intriguing, especially in the virtual world.
VS: Certainly.

[19.20]
asondheim: that's not true either,
Second Front works with virtual
theater in SL as did Chaplin's
Modern Times

-robmyers: Is it the difference
between reading a script and
watching a play?

[19.38]
VS: Clara asked, "Do you think the brain has
a genre?"

SS: Does the brain have a genre? (laughs).
It probably depends on the brain. Mine's a
comedy, most days, unless I'm sitting in a
meeting ...

[19.38]
-alberto: no doubt, words are
exciting, and produce imagination
stimulus
-yann: does something that you
absolutely don't understand
stimulta imagination ?
-Clara: it was a question to
someone else...
bonemap: does the brain have a
gender?

[20.09]
VS: There's a question here from Rob Myers, "Is it the difference between reading a script and watching a play?" Is there a difference? I guess the question is, what is the difference?
SS: That's an interesting question. I try to give my students to read as many plays as possible and of course they like to read descriptions of them.

[20.35]
SS: You create a virtual world when you're reading a play, in your imagination, and so you have to supply all the information. When you watch it, it's interactive and yet in a way it's almost more passive. So that's a very interesting question.

[20.55]
VS: Cool. That's a good question to put towards the end perhaps for all of three of you who presented to discuss.
VS: "Does something that you absolutely don't understand simulate imagination?" It's a question from Yann.

[21.20]
VS: Does something that you absolutely don't understand simulate imagination? So I guess if you're confused by the context, and just allow yourself to follow the text – is that imagination operating? I guess being operated by the person supplying the text?

[21.49]
VS: Perhaps Yann could rephrase the question?
SS: So much of the imagination fills things in in real live theatre, when we see things on stage that we don't know what they mean, we try to understand them. And sometimes an actor will mess up, make a mistake, on stage and it's like, well how does that relate to what I've been seeing and how does it make sense in the larger question? And so I think the imagination is a powerful tool, to try to figure out things and make connections even when they're not there. Perhaps that explains the United States' political process?

[20.09]
xoxoxcom: what does it mean if your brain is a space opera? good/bad?

-mem: hah, those people from "traditional" theatre practise rarely can bear the fact that they don't own it anymore

[20.35]
-robmyers: The difference between text vr and 3d vr...

-helen: it's the same as diff between reading a nocel or seeing the movie

[20.55]
-robmyers: Ooh
-alberto: good reflection
-helen: one you have to use your imagination, the other it's a bit more spoon-feeding
JamesBomd: genres of being: brain, body, penis etc..

[21.20]
-helen: simulate or stimulate?

-alberto: ummm, both, simulate-stimulating

[21.49]
NathalieFougeras: Yann simulate ir stimulate??
NathalieFougeras: or..
-yann: stimulate..
suzon: stimulate..
JamesBomd: simulated stimulation.. humabns do it all the time

-hi: cyberperformance is the future of performing arts, many are afraid of the future or can't accept change

[22.26]
VS: This is I guess the brain genre question: Hugs & kisses dot com says "What does it mean if your brain is a space opera? Good or bad?" (laughs)

[22.43]
SS: (laughs) Ah – if you're sitting in a meeting with a bunch of people talking about campus technology, I think that would be wonderful because it would be a great escape.

[22.59]
VS: Annie Abrahams asks about your public for Netseduction, when you were doing it, and did you take them into account? Who were your public? How many, I guess, and how did you account for them in the production?

[23.28]
SS: Part of the theme was that I was writing this play for people who would be online, and see this play.
As it turned out, we had a very limited audience – they had to apply to be allowed into the venue at the time – and I guess I was thinking that people who would be the audience would have already been clued in to the world of the web and MOOs and so on.

[24.02]
So I guess I was kind of expecting a more sophisticated audience technologically, and also one that would be absolutely horrified by some of the language that's used. Quite frankly, I'm a little surprised at the text of Netseduction now that I look back at it.

[22.26]
-helen: big difference between simulate *& stimulate!
-anniea: Disd you have public Stephen, when you were doing netseduction did you take them in account?
-test: the worlds created through reading are dirived from our own visual and auditory references - the 'play' is the interpretation of someone else references shared the best way they know how?

[22.43]
-Clara: Question to Stephen: have you updated your cathegories of digital performance from 2007?
-anniea: Or is not important / Are the public the players

[22.59]
-helen: please ask clara's question: Question to Stephen: have you updated your cathegories of digital performance from 2007?

[23.28]
-Bolden: Text does play a very big role on the human imagination and creativity, but the virtual world such as Second Life gives a chance for people to excercise this creativity using their imagination; One doesn't necessarily tower over the other xoxoxcom: "hugs and kisses dot com" is also a brilliant way to read my name - accounts for both my identity and belief system
-robmyers: Is the script of NetSeduction available? Or any write-ups?

[24.02]
-helen: yes the script is on stephen's presenter page on cyposium.net
-remo: agree, Bolden stephenschrum: musofyr.com/NetSed/ NetSedDraft2.pdf
-robmyers: Thank you!

[24.40]
VS: Clara has asked a question which hasn't
been picked up: "Have you updated your
categories of digital performance from
2007?"

[24.51]
SS: I'm thinking that was the taxonomy
of digital performance that I created back
then; ah, right. Actually I have not looked
back at that. I kind of created that – I don't
want to say spur of the moment, but it came
out of a previous conference of my theatre
conference, where somebody had said,
we don't have categories, we don't have a
taxonomy. And so then I created that in order
to start that conversation. To be honest, I
have not looked back at that, and after about
5 years it's probably about time to revisit that
and to look back at it, yes.

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[24.51]
-helen: the taxomony

-helen: yes
-helen: :)


-helen: haha

-alberto: certainly, in second
life or something like that,
audience-public make the
performance
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[25.33]
VS: Sure; this CyPosium gives a really
great opportunity as well to really broaden
people's awareness of things that are
happening.
VS: Yann's talking further about his
questions; "it's possible to simulate a
performance made by bots so that they
will simulate imagination and we won't
understand what happens" – so is it possible
to simulate human imagination?

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[25.33]
-yann: but it's possible that's
cyberformance made by bots will
*simulate* imagination and that
we won't understand what happens
and so ... it will *stimulate* our
human imagination..
-anniea: What do you think about
this Stephen?
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[26.22]
SS: I hope we cannot simulate human
imagination! (laughs) Skynet may be able to
do that in the future and send back people to
hurt us. But, I think imagination is really the
key to all the arts and to online performance.
I did a presentation last year for some faculty,
and one said, what if we ever have actors
who work robots on stage like in that movie
with the wolverine, what's his name, where
the robots are fighting? And I thought, why
would we want to watch robots on stage,
worked by actors? I want to watch an actor
create something. And in the same way, I
think I want the performers online, I want to
know that there's an agency, a human agency,
behind that.

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[26.22]
-helen: stimulate
-yann: ;-))
-yann: hope so too
xoxoxcom: crucial t there
-anniea: Often scrammbled text
is more stimulating than well
organised sentences
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[27.25]
VS: I think there's a bit of discussion
going on around Yann's question. Annie is
still talking about text and she had asked
a question up here about audience again
– I think it was a further iteration of her
question before.

[27.25]
-helen: i agree about human
agency
-marischka: bots are only useful
as human slaves that impersonate
an idea, or a distortion human-
ness etc
xoxoxcom: alphabits are arguably
the most stimulating form of
narrative - especially if you're
hungry

[28.22]
VS: Annie's question was about the
audience as player. So you had a very well-
versed audience. Have you had an instance
where your audience were completely
unaware of where you were operating in
that? And this is probably a really nice
segue into the next presenter and also
Adriene's work as well, because they both
interacted with audiences who might have
been unaware of their presence there as an
agent.

SS: I think ATHEMOO was the most
covert of performances in a way, because
nobody really knew who these characters
were, everyone just had a single name,
Alan, or Beth, and since that time it's been
very difficult to try to, in Second Life for
example, if I use my avatar it has my name
on it, so we all know who we are. And
that gives a kind of double meaning to it.
Is it theatrecropolis or is it this character,
Prometheus for example? So it kind of blurs
the line.

[29.37]
VS: Thanks for that Stephen, that was
fantastic. And we'll welcome you back
at the end for further discussion. And for
those of you who didn't get your questions
answered, there's time at the end to do that
as well.

[29.37]

-helen: did we answer YOUR
questions?
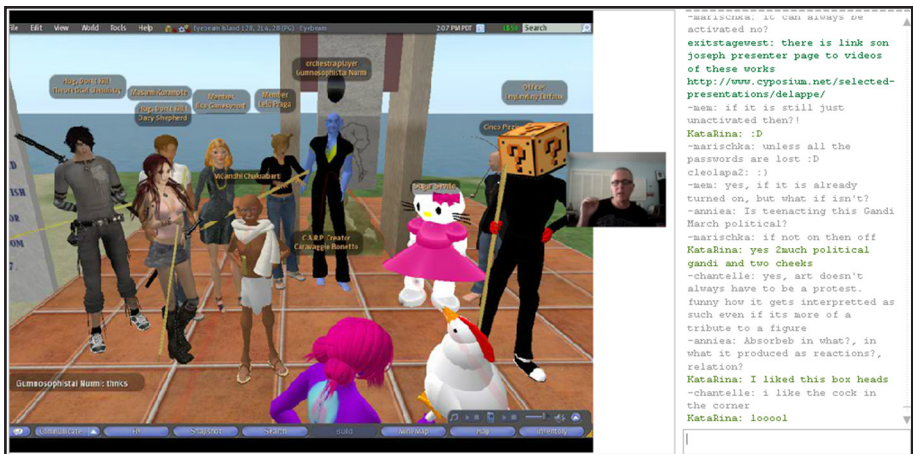
HEAD SHOT! Performative Interventions in Mixed Realities

Joseph DeLappe

This is an edited transcript of Joseph DeLappe's presentation, in which he contextualized an approach to creative activities in computer games as locations for interventionist performances and/or sites for data extraction for the creation of artifacts.

I'm primarily a visual artist – most of the 90s I was creating physical objects, digital photography, installations and electro-mechanical controlled computer installations. I came to computer games in my creative practice in the years 1996-97. It was first through watching some of my students who were playing these games. Around this time I invented *The Artist's Mouse*,[1] where I attached a pencil to my Apple desktop mouse to allow for the creation of abstract marks during computer usage. I first used this device to engage in a series of levels in *Unreal*,[2] the first iteration of this popular first person shooter computer game. I replaced my mousepad with very traditional rag drawing paper and used an ebony black pencil to create, through computer game-play, some really amazing artifacts. They were a literal kind of analogue mapping of my digital experience – abstract drawings as records of playing these games.

As these drawings went on, I started engaging in some of the newer games that were coming out such as *Quake*,[3] and I was immediately struck by the way people communicated through text; there was something tricky about this, a sort of connection of old technologies with new technologies (analogous in a way to

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1 See: www.delappe.net/sculpture/the-artists-mouse/ (accessed August 16, 2013).
2 See: www.delappe.net/drawings/playing-unreal/ (accessed August 26, 2013).
3 See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quake_(video_game) (accessed August 26, 2013).
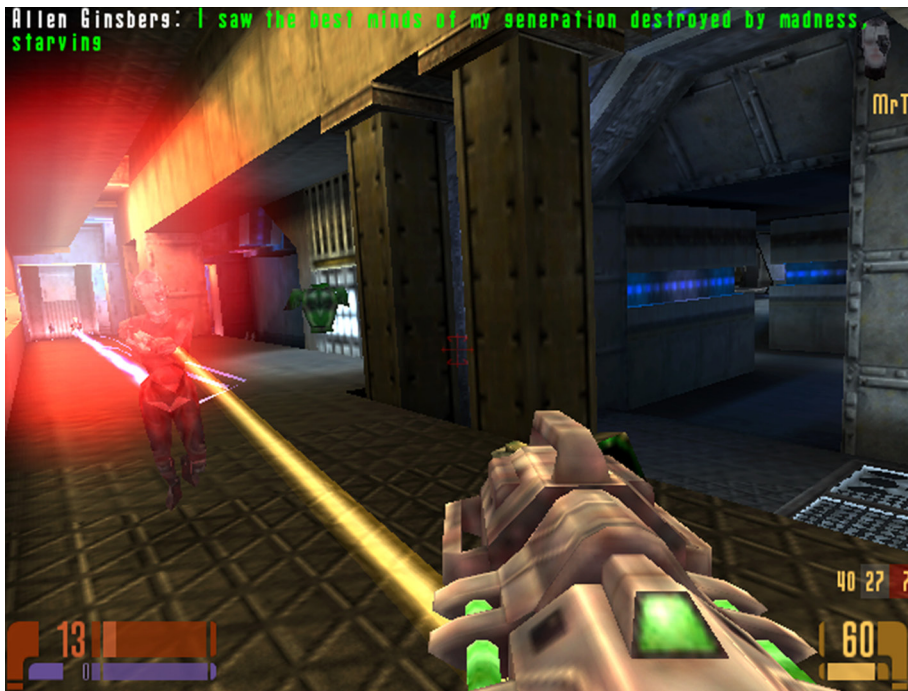
Howl Elite Force Voyager Online*, online gaming performance/intervention, 2001.*

connecting a pencil to a desktop mouse, but I digress …). Here we have a kind of virtual reality where you're essentially running around these amazing 3D spaces killing each other, yet the way you facilitate communication with each other is through a 19th century invention, the keyboard. I love that contradiction. This inspired the notion to create my first text-based performance inside a first person shooter game.

In my first online performance, in 2001, I went into *Star Trek Elite Force Voyager Online*[4] as Alan Ginsberg, and proceeded to type in his seminal beat poem *Howl*,[5] word for word using the text chat system. I had no idea whether this was interesting or significant – it seemed actually kind of stupid, and I liked that. It was absurd. It took me 6 hours, it was this durational act of actually typing and physically engaging – and taking agency in this space. A big part of this was in my thinking of these online gaming environments as a new type of public space – as a kind of theatrical set. It became the first of a number of projects.

I went on from there, some years later in 2003, to invite five of my gamer students to join me to recreate an entire episode from the TV show *Friends*[6] inside a *Quake 3* Arena server. This was an insane experience. The piece involved the use of six screen projections in the performance space – one for each character from the show, so you had Rachel, Ross, Chandler, Phoebe, Monica and Joey as *Quake* avatars, each 'reading' their lines into the text chat system in real time. This was a type of mash-up, of bringing together *Quake* and *Friends* and just saying, boom, let's

4 See: www.delappe.net/play/howl-elite-force-voyager-online/ (accessed August 26, 2013).

5 See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Howl (accessed August 26, 2013).

6 See: www.imdb.com/title/tt0108778/ (accessed August 26, 2013).

take these cultural inanities and see what comes out if you smash them together. The project was reported in *The New York Times* by Matt Mirapul,[7] who was then the "Arts Online" writer for the paper. Unexpectedly this drew the attention of Warner Bros. Television who sent me a 'cease and desist' letter through an attorney, saying I was violating their copyright. Fighting back, I claimed my rights for fair use and refused to do anything they said and went on with the performance. They backed down – I only agreed to let them know if I was to ever perform the piece again in the future (I had no plans to do so and haven't since).

The performance itself was quite intense, it was just unbelievably chaotic; as each performer is typing, they're also talking into a microphone and that was amplified as well as the sound from the six versions of the game all going at the same time. It was all really chaotic but also quite wonderful and absurd.

There are a number of projects in the interim that I am skipping over here, including re-enacting all three of the 2004 presidential debates in various game spaces; you can find that work online.[8]

Things for me became more serious in 2004 – the web site for the World Trade Centre memorial site[9] was published, and featured all 5201 proposals that were submitted for the memorial at Ground Zero in New York City. This was really a pivotal experience that ended up leading to the next project, among others. It brought up this question about, what is a memorial? What does it mean to go to war in an age of virtual machines? What was going on in the first decade of this century was really

are you memorialising*, online gaming performance/intervention, 2006-2011.*

7 See: www.nytimes.com/2003/03/03/arts/arts-online-take-that-monica-kapow-chandler.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm (accessed August 26, 2013).
8 See: www.delappe.net/play/the-great-debates/ (accessed August 26, 2013).
9 See: www.wtcsitememorial.org/index.html (accessed August 26, 2013).

quite disturbing and as an artist, I chose to respond.

The project *dead in iraq*[10] was essentially a performative intervention into the *America's Army* game,[11] which is the very popular free online first person shooter game and recruiting tool developed by the Defense Department. I remember when this first came out, when this was announced, I remember thinking, wow, there must be something to do in this space as a performer. But this is truly a serious game, it took some years to develop an appropriate concept for an intervention. It was actually the release of the memorial proposals for 9/11 that sparked the idea. I was thinking a lot about the Vietnam memorial and the listing of all the names in the granite – this in part led to the ideation of *dead in iraq*.

Essentially, between 2006 and 2011 I endeavored to go into the *America's Army* game, my avatar's name being 'dead in iraq', and instead of playing the game, I type the name, age, service branch and date of death of every casualty – American casualty – from the war, into the game, directly into the text chat. This was really a very private act at the start. But it went viral very quickly, there were a number of stories written – I think the first one was on *Rhizome*[12] and then it got onto *Salon*, *Wired* – eventually I ended up being interviewed on *NPR*, *CNN*, *CBC Canada*, German radio, etcetera. This became a hugely controversial project – I found myself constantly under attack by people who were questioning my patriotism, my methods, people were saying, "why don't you go protest on the steps of the federal building?", and my response was essentially, well "This IS the federal building!"; *America's Army* is in fact kind of US military territory. You know, this is a new type of government funded propagandisation of virtual space. It is important to reiterate - in all of these projects I'd look at these game spaces as a new type of public space. And you can think of this as a kind of online street theatre, or protest. It was very interesting to be having my work questioned and being engaged in these dialogues through emails and through the comments at the end of these various articles and such, and actually deciding then to engage in more text-based dialogue and communication and debate as a result of reactions to my intervention. Curiously, in one of these instances of being kind of attacked by someone, I think it might have been on my YouTube channel, this guy accused me of having a 'Gandhi complex'. That really stuck with me and was in part the inspiration for a new project in online performance that came soon after.

Also I was involved in the fake *New York Times* project[13] – this was an amazing project involving the Yes Men, Steve Lambert, a number of other activists groups, artists and writers in New York City. At the time I was in New York, at Eyebeam[14] on a residency, and became involved in this project for which I wrote a fake article for the Education section. It was a utopian version of *The New York Times*, "all the news we'd like to see". I created an article called "Popular *America's Army* video game, recruiting tool cancelled"[15] and my idea was essentially that *America's Army* was cancelled and the State Department was going to use the money saved to create a new game called *America's Diplomat*. This is a way of questioning, again, what is it

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10 See: www.delappe.net/project/dead-in-iraq/ (accessed August 26, 2013).
11 See: www.americasarmy.com/ (accessed August 26, 2013).
12 See: http://rhizome.org/editorial/archive/2006/May/5/ (accessed August 26, 2013).
13 See: www.nytimes-se.com/ (accessed August 26, 2013).
14 See: www.eyebeam.org/ (accessed August 26, 2013).
15 See: http://nytimes-se.com/todays-paper/NYTimes-SE.pdf (accessed August 26, 2013).

we choose to do in terms of gaming, in terms of play, in terms of using our resources to attract young people into service for our country?

As a result of *dead in iraq*, I started engaging in further research regarding the provenance of protest in the 20th century. In researching the last hundred years of political protest, all roads, literally, lead to Gandhi. I began reading a lot about Gandhi and really getting refamiliarised with his amazing work and started to think of him in a way almost as a conceptual artist – he was brilliant in terms of the strategies he developed. His salt march[16] really stood out for me as a seminal act of protest. I decided, for my next work, in 2008, to re-enact Gandhi's salt march in Second Life. I created an avatar, Gandhi
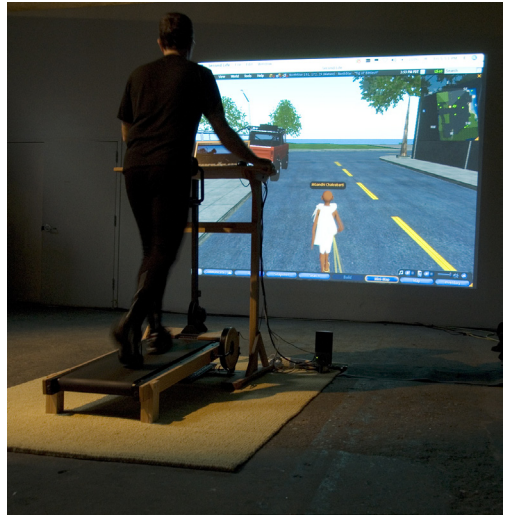
Gandhi's March to Dandi in Second Life*, mixed reality performance, 2008. Photographer: Christine A. Butler.*

Chakrabarti, and converted a 'walk-fit' treadmill – this is a self-powered treadmill – to become my game controller. Essentially the treadmill would translate my steps to become Gandhi's steps in Second Life. It was a very simple construction but it allowed me to set up this space which was in Eyebeam in their public environment where the re-enactment took place. My reenactment of Gandhi's salt march involved walking 240 miles on the treadmill taking Gandhi throughout Second Life, for 26 days over the anniversary days of the actual 1930's march. This durational performance was a intensively revelatory experience. There were many reasons behind the concept of this project. One of them was another project that I forgot to mention, the sister project to *dead in iraq*, called *iraqimemorial.org*,[17] a web site that was directly inspired by by the World Trade Centre call for proposals. But rather than seeking proposals to memorialize 9/11, I was asking artists, architects, anyone, to upload proposals to create a memorial to the civilians of Iraq who were dying in ever greater numbers at the time. I spent about 2 to 3 years really immersed in these projects, *dead in iraq* and *iraqimemorial*, immersed in death, and mourning, and protest – and being largely attacked for my efforts.

One of the things I loved about Gandhi was his ability to protest and fight and do these actions while keeping a sense of joy of life and positivism. The Gandhi work became a way of doing something that was a kind of foil to those other projects, but also an exploration of protest, in the sense that I wasn't actually protesting anything yet I was paying reverence to this great figure of history, but also saying, alright, you can go into Second Life and you can be anything you want. If that's the case then why not Gandhi? This middle-aged white guy 'being' Gandhi, I think there's a nice tension there. What became fascinating in actually doing the

16 See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salt_March (accessed August 26, 2013).
17 See: www.iraqimemorial.org (accessed August 26, 2013).

march was how completely absorbed I became in this experience. I envisaged it as a durational performance work, in the tradition of the great durational performance works that had taken place in New York City, from Joseph Beuys to Linda Montano, etcetera. Yet I didn't anticipate that this project would literally change me. I would wander around Second Life and aim myself towards the little green dots which were other residents and go up to them, and invariably they would say, "Gandhi! What's up? What's happening?" I would offer them a gift of my walking stick and ask them to join me, and many would walk with me, some for days, some for five minutes. In doing this work for six to eight hours each day, walking roughly ten miles each day, stopping, chatting, etcetera, and then I would go back to my apartment, I would eat, I would sleep, I'd wake up and come back the next day and do this. I was living and breathing Gandhi and Second Life. I became deeply absorbed in the work – to the point of a blurring or slippage between the real and the virtual. Gandhi would walk across a mountain and fall off – as a result I was nearly falling off the treadmill. I'd be walking down the streets of New York City and seeing people and thinking I could click on them and get information. This work inhabited my psyche and physical body in a way that I didn't anticipate. I lost 8 pounds, I had this connection to my avatar that I really did not anticipate. The experience was profound in a manner that I had not anticipated in conceiving the work.

Afterwards I really missed Gandhi. I basically retired him at the end of the performance yet I missed him, and decided that I really needed to do something in terms of building, of making something regarding the experience. This led to the creation of a 17-foot tall cardboard sculpture of my Gandhi avatar which was displayed at the end of my residency at Eyebeam.[18]

Taking agency

Excerpt from the discussion following Joseph Delappe's presentation. JDL is Joseph Delappe and VS is Vicki Smith (discussion facilitator).

VS: My question to you is about the agency of the audience – because you're coming into a space where people are engaged in their own kind of activity – how your audience engages with you. Obviously you get shot a lot. How do you try and engage them?

JDL: Well you know, with this kind of intervention, I try to think of it in a way as kind of conscientious spamming. I get called a troll, a spammer, I get booted quite a bit, but I don't know, I guess there is this kind of imposition of my creative will in these spaces, but I look at other avatars in these spaces, whether it's in Second Life or *America's Army* or *Quake*, as co-performers. It's a way of appropriating their activities for my own desires and I recognise that. But also, it's in some ways certainly a kind of critique of the proscribed nature of these spaces, particularly shooter games where there's rules to the game and this possessive quality to first person shooter participants that really is – you know, I think it's a way of breaking through that magic circle briefly with some other content, and bringing high

18 See: www.delappe.net/project/cardboard-gandhi-2008-2009/ (accessed August 26, 2013).

literature carefully typed, like *Howl*, into a game space, is a way of saying ok, you're doing this, not that, and maybe this is interesting. The notion of taking agency, again – we have these amazing spaces so why do I have to just come here and shoot things? Why can't I come here and do something else? That's an area that I'm really interested in – there is a tradition of artists going into public spaces and doing strange things, and doing performances, from street art to Laurie Anderson standing on a street corner in New York City in ice skates and ice blocks playing the violin. No-one invited her to do that, you know.
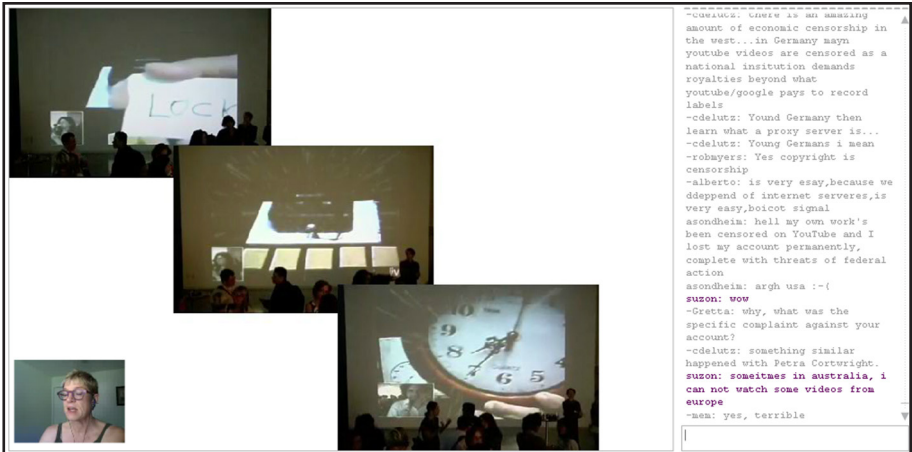
So Far and Yet, So Close: Lessons Drawn from Telematic Improvisation

Adriene Jenik

This article is developed from the paper that Adriene Jenik presented at the CyPosium, specifically focussing on her project Women in Black in the Palace.

> Technology is not just about computers and movement is not just about dancing bodies. Both are about communication across people in a rapidly advancing technological age in which the relations traversing bodies, art, image technologies, and the marketplace need to be continuously evaluated and changed if necessary.[1]

In this short essay, I examine long-held notions of the centrality of proximal bodies in improvisation. Though the subject of the live body has been interrogated in relation to technological prosthesis and the residue of the live body has been acknowledged even in its mediated form,[2] much remains to understand. When improvising across distances (as takes place with telematic improvisation), how do the improvisers utilize the unique properties of distance? What types of performance cues develop within a networked improvisatory environment? I draw upon my artistic experience as director of a number of my own improvisational performance projects (Desktop Theater, *SPECFLIC*, and the *Open_Borders*) to address these and other questions. In doing so, I hope to expand the discussion of this practice and address not only differences in form and technique, but the ways in which socio-political context, language difference, and time zone might become a part of the

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1 Susan Kozel, *Closer* (Cambridge: MIT Press - Leonardo Book Series, 2007), 135.
2 See Philip Auslander, *LIVENESS: Performance in Mediated Culture* (Routledge,1999).

critical conversation surrounding improvisation.

For more than two decades, I've collaborated with others developing telematic performances via telecommunications networks. Though the work has not always been framed as improvisation, the changing nature of embodiment and rapid innovations in technology have meant that much of this activity is necessarily contingent. The work has been strengthened through its (explicit and implicit) embrace of improvisatory techniques and processes. The heightened awareness, attentive listening, responsive flexibility and celebration of the great potential inherent in collective creation that are hallmarks of group improvisation in music and dance, are evident in these telematic experiments.

A unique feature of telematic improvisation, and one that deserves further examination and inquiry, is the spatial and temporal location of the improvising bodies. Through the use of network technology, these bodies need no longer be co-located. Improvisation occurs across distance, interrupting the formative assumption in improvisational practice of the proximal body. As short trips via long-distance airlines are viewed less favorably due to environmental impact, and traversing borders grows more precarious due to increased militarization of national borders, telematic alternatives are being considered anew by artists committed to international exchange and expressive collaboration – with this CyPosium an example. Differences of location, time of day, and other context markers (e.g. socio-political environment, economic and institutional variables, and choice of interior vs. exterior setting) effect the improvisation. Improvising across mediated networks makes some heretofore steady-state dependencies (like synchronous sound) frustrating utopic states; while enabling other performance possibilities to emerge.

Case study: Desktop Theater

Desktop Theater (DT)[3] experiments were conducted over the course of five years from 1997-2002, and utilized a broad range of approaches (including multi-act scripted plays, improvised investigative forays into online space, and ritualized performance activities with our expanding Troupe). Here, I focus on a single series of improvisations, *Women in Black in the Palace*, that took place in September 2001. During August and September of that year, my DT collaborator and I were temporarily residing in New York City having been awarded a Franklin Furnace Future of the Present residency grant. Our proposed goal was to develop a series of DT workshops and make progress on a larger media piece on the privatization of (online and urban) public space. Shortly after our arrival having begun these activities, the Twin Towers were attacked and the entire socio-political context in which we were operating took a dramatic shift.

Besides the larger psycho-social impact on US citizens, NYC was physically affected, and as temporary residents of Manhattan, we were not immune. Friends and associates were traumatized and Franklin Furnace's office on John Street was rendered completely inaccessible to everyone supporting our project. Our own feelings of loss and mourning were palpable, as was the tremendous public grief and anxiety over the possibility of additional attacks. As well, our project server

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3 http://desktoptheater.org/

was destroyed along with an entire server farm situated on the roof of Tower II. We moved about in the first days and weeks offering what we could in volunteer hours, blood donations, debriefing sessions, and participating in concerts and art exhibitions that contributed to relief efforts. Needless to say, it was necessary to completely rethink and redirect our residency outcomes.

During this very tangible, dense, vocal and vibrant public mourning and processing of the attacks, I did my best to relate to friends and relatives outside the mood of the city. As the month of September drew to a close and war cries directed toward Afghanistan grew louder, I noticed a strong split between the sentiment of those who had suffered through the effects of the attacks and the growing nationalistic fervor elsewhere. On the subway the conversations[4] did not tend toward support of violent retribution. Meanwhile, my friends in San Diego reported of enthusiastic support for President Bush and his waging of a 'War on Terror' in Afghanistan. I began to wonder about the cultural 'climate' in our visual chat platform, The Palace, and asked Brenneis and another DT Troupe member to join me for some improvisation.

Screengrab from Women in Black in the Palace*, Desktop Theatre, September 15-16 2001.*

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4 People were freely talking to each other in an unusual way during the days and weeks immediately following the 9-11 attacks.

Technology

The Palace was an early, free, easy to use and access[5] online visual chat-space where 'rooms' (appearing in discrete graphical windows) were configured within 'palaces' (server-hosts). People from anywhere in the world could appear as avatars and relate to one another through text, movement and other forms of expression. One's visual appearance on screen (known as an avatar) could be chosen from a menu of offerings, or could be created from any bitmapped image and uploaded (an affordance not possible in most contemporary chat spaces at that time). As a result, the crude, cartoon drawn and photography-based bitmapped images worn by the population resulted in an extremely heterogeneous visual effect. Different palaces (and rooms within palaces) hosted different subcultures, evident through the types of avatars and types of conversations taking place. DT utilized many aspects of this space over years of experimentation, but in September 2001, I was most interested in exploring its characteristic as a public space – a virtual stand-in for an internationally situated 'downtown'.

Technology and bodies

I proposed a simple structure for this improvisation. Women in Black is a group of women in Israel who have, for years, been holding weekly silent vigils in public space.[6] This public mourning is witness and calls awareness to the violence directed toward the Palestinian people by the Israeli state. The power of these silent female figures dressed in black has had an impact over time. In proposing the re-contextualization of this symbolic civic action, I wondered what might change in the move to virtual space? What impact could a silent procession of mourners have in chat space (a space primarily organized around exchanges of words)? How would they be understood at this particular historical moment?

I drew and uploaded simple avatars shrouded in black (with two sets of avatars in profile which could be switched to indicate a direction of the procession across the screen). I also created simple props that included hand-lettered protest signs (peace in English and Arabic script) and olive branches. The evening of the first scheduled improvisational foray, I offered simple instructions on controlling the avatar and props and directed the others to follow me as I moved from room to room. I asked them to move slowly, fluidly (using an unusual pixel forward command) and silently through the rooms. I added a prompt to leave olive branches and picket signs as residue in the rooms we traversed, thinking others might pick them up and join us. Though I felt strongly that we should remain silent, I suggested using a bubble function (adding a typed computer script command so any typed words appear in a thought bubble). I directed performers to 'whisper'[7] if they felt it impolite to ignore a question. Improvisation was in play in our choice of props, our proximity to one another's avatar, our dynamically evolving composition of bodies in the 2D square 'room', and our limited interaction to the other activity in the room. In a way, the

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5 Base requirements for connection speed was a very low 14.4 hz modem speed.
6 See: www.womeninblack.org/
7 Enter into a private chat by clicking directly on another chat participant.

Screengrab from Women in Black in the Palace*, Desktop Theatre, September 15-16 2001.*

simplicity and scaled back nature of our vigil cast a spotlight on the (intentional and unintentional) improvisations of the fellow chat-room denizens.[8] The challenge, as with all street performance, is to create a compelling event that allows for multiple exits, entrances and interpretations.

As with much virtual engagement anonymity and distance from each other can foster an environment seemingly unmoored from ethics and human compassion. In this performance, the geographically distributed chatroom participants and their global awareness of the impact of the 9-11 attacks combined to unveil the Palace as the global village imagined in the early days of network TV.[9] The slow steady movements of our silent shrouded figures shifted the mood in every space we entered. That three characters were moving together in a specific direction was itself unusual. Our clustered avatars, in their homogeneity (different but visibly related), stood out from the riotous heterogeneity apparent throughout this visual space. Because the action was so simple, our own distance from one another (connected at different geographical sites) did not pose a significant challenge.

8 My Desktop Theater partner Lisa Brenneis consistently voiced her dislike of this performance strategy. She was concerned with the (mis)use of knowledge as power that this type of ideological costuming wields. My own perspective has always been that these spaces are, to varying degrees, performed by their users; ripe for something, anything to happen.
9 See John Downing, *RADICAL MEDIA: The Political Experience of Alternative Communication* (South End Press, 1984).

Border

Women in Black in the Palace was performed 3 different times.[10] Its quiet solemnity provoked a profound array of responses that surprised us in their depth and variety. It was interesting to me that our silent vigil was more effective at unveiling the cultural, age and gender background of Palace occupants than the everpresent a/s/l (for age/sex/location) query. Our vigil unleashed every conceivable response among those occupying the rooms we traversed: expositions to others assembled on the origins of 'women in black'; debates on the history of Western imperialism in Arab lands; personal perspectives on 9-11; juvenile insults; flag-toting patriotic heckling; sound and visual effects that simulated bombs being dropped; and still, silent observation of our passage. Some chat denizens picked up a dropped sign or an olive leaf and joined us for awhile. It became clear that the people in the room were women and men, old and young, from the right and left of the political spectrum, and from a variety of countries (including Eastern and Western Europe, the Middle East and South America).

Since most of the time, in virtual space, spatial and temporal bodies are masked and shrouded from view; it was fascinating to discover that shrouding ourselves instigated an emergence of people from behind their shadow online selves. Especially fertile was the way in which the perceived alterity of an Arab or

Screengrab from Women in Black in the Palace*, Desktop Theatre, September 15-16 2001.*

10 Performances took place September 15 and 16, 2001.

Muslim woman operated within this global chat sphere. It became all too apparent that the suffering and persistence of Afghani women, in the face of decades of war, exists in a parallel universe from the privileged peace and leisure of the online chat space. The measured march of these spectral figures across the screen clarified, if just for a moment, that the 9-11 attacks impacted people across state and national borders in very different ways. Making this 'visible' through this simple unscripted action points to the power of non-bodies in non-space to catalyze awareness of our particular bodies in particular spaces.

Conclusion

My conclusions on the affordances of telematic performance center around the awareness and use of distance as a way to gain critical perspective on the situated body. As a performer and director, this encourages the "sur-reflective" state described by Kozel from Merleau-Ponty.[11] While the importance and utility of the personal exchange and intimacy afforded by travel is not to be dismissed, allowing performers to remain in their home environments and not uproot or dislocate to present their work can support new levels of urgency, and create an opportunity to reveal a richer context for the work. Performers that might not have the opportunity to gain support from international performance networks (either because they are younger, more marginal or political, or as women do not have the option of leaving their family to go on tour) can come to light – if the technology needed for connection is simple and accessible. And though the power of a shared proximal audience is not to be denied, being alone or in a small group connected via machine is not always an alienated state. A heightened awareness of an audience of their context (physical, economic, spiritual, linguistic) and an awareness of the ways in which this social envelope shapes ideas and artistry can add another layer of respect and appreciation in a performance exchange. As well, the dynamic rhetorical and legal boundaries of our nationstates, and their uneven effect on bodies of color are made visible and tangible. To what end is up to us.

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11 Kozel (2007) uses the term "sur-reflective" rather than "hyper-reflective" as she believes this is mistranslated from Merleu-Ponty's concept. She writes, "[t]he transation of sur-reflexion as hyper-reflection is unfortunate, particularly in the era of hypertexts and hyperlinks in which there is a sense that hyper means accelerated ..." (p.22). She then goes on throughout the book to use the term as a replacement for hyper-reflection in Merleau-Ponty, which "could be described through the prefix "meta" or "reflection from the midst"; it is an immersed and kinaesthetic reflection rather than unidirectional or once-removed." See: Susan Kozel, *Closer* (Cambridge: MIT P - Leonardo Book Series, 2007).

asonneim: I've been playing
nepalese sarangis while listening
- they're quiet enough
suzon: or english based?
-mem: my hands are very
performative
-yann: do you know the name of
this australian performer working
with robotic, body and the
internet ?
-helen: stelarc?
-yann: (trou
de maoire...)
**suzon: yes, but you need to have
a code**
-alberto: we use,body,robots,etc
-yann: yes ! thanks @helen
suzon: to dance on S1
-cdelutz: I like Joseph's walking
interface - use the body to
movethrough online space
-GrettaLouw: thanks Vicki
-mem: i am interested how much
had cost that Ghandi walk? in SL
dollars
asonheim: the dances I've
videoed in SL have one dance/film
awards (two of them) -they're
hardly characters bouncing around
**suzon: mem: i am interested how
much had cost that Ghandi walk?
in SL dollars**

We are Still Trying to Figure Out What to Say One to Another

Discussion, Block 2

Excerpt from the Block 2 discussion, with Stephen Schrum (SS), Joseph DeLappe (JDL) and Adriene Jenik (AJ); facilitated by Vicki Smith (VS).

VS: Here are a couple of questions, which would be good for you all three to address. One of them was specifically about how you, Joseph, were moved by the Gandhi performance. But perhaps all of you could respond. How performances have moved you in terms of your engagement, and engagement of the audience with you. But I'll leave it for you to address first, Joseph?

JDL: It was quite unexpected, actually. I went into the project from a kind of artist conceptual standpoint of, this would be really interesting to do, and there was a theoretical background to the piece in taking on this huge responsibility of "being Gandhi". There was something really edgy about that. That disappeared very soon as the actual experience of the performance became almost like a community building experience. I ended up having a list of followers to whom I would announce my arrival in the morning: "Hey, join me!", and people would come and walk with me and there was this kind of interaction and an engagement that was very intense ... I forgot to mention, one of the primary aspects of the piece that was intense, is that these other older text-based performances were all typing, which is definitely a physical, durational activity. I mean, my wrists would ache after typing for eight hours, doing debates and that sort of thing. But in Gandhi, to actually physically put your body into a situation where there was a chance of failure, things like falling off the treadmill and injuring myself, not being able to finish the 240 miles, that added a level of realism, in a way. When I finished the walk, I really felt like I had

accomplished something. The irony of course being that I had never moved from a very confined space for a month. That really interests me. I did take it on – there was something about "being Gandhi" that changed me. These avatars are possibly more than simply visual representations of some kind of virtual other, I think. As I mentioned in my talk earlier, Sherry Turkle in her book *Life on the Screen*, talks about people and MUDS, about how intensely these experiences changed people. I was very sceptical of that, but this experience really changed my point of view in that regard.

VS: It became very embodied. Stephen, Adriene, how would you respond to that question about being moved by the process of performance, and the embodied activity?

SS: I was intrigued by the whole Gandhi thing because having acted in Second Life as various characters, including Prometheus, the Titan, it's always kind of a representation of a character, but, then, to represent a person that carries with them so many ideas, that really intrigues me.

AJ: Actually, Lisa and I became very close to our avatars. It was sort of shocking how much affection there was, that we still hold for them. I became really aware of just how simple the Palace is, but how much people would project onto these little images, with very very very little cues ... how easy it was. I am reminded of Janet Murray's thoughts – it's not just in gaming or narrative on-line, it's not just suspension of disbelief; it's agency plus image that makes for belief. That was really shocking to me, and a really interesting and important revelation. One of the goals of the Desktop Theater, and certainly as well from *No Borders to Naftaazteca*, is to genuinely connect with people across borders in a meaningful way. I am still shocked about how now we can connect with people, and we are still trying to figure out what to say one to another besides what time it is, and what's the weather like, and how to really have a deeper conversation. Some of the work that Joseph has done, or what I am trying to do, or what other people in the chat space are doing, is to develop the ability for us to really talk to one another, in a deep way, in the spaces where we're not trying to pick each other sexually, and talk about things that are important to us. My thought was that theatre could introduce some other entrance point. Especially for cross-generational talk: how do I have a conversation with a young guy about something of importance to him, of mutual importance to me. What does that look like? If you just saw me and I'm a near-50 year old woman situated in this space, and you're there, what are the barriers to that happening and what makes that possible? And the other thing is about learning what is easy in these spaces, and what's difficult. It's really easy to be funny and have a quip, and pathos is very difficult. Real affect, other kinds of emotions are much more difficult.

It Was Already Out-dated When We Started

Discussion, Block 2

Excerpt from the Block 2 discussion, with Stephen Schrum (SS), Joseph DeLappe (JDL) and Adriene Jenik (AJ); facilitated by Vicki Smith (VS).

VS: There's a question: "Is not text and telematic performance going to get outdated with more embodied performance with avatars and more developed interfaces that allow more embodiment?"

SS: I think people will continue to use text-based performance. A year ago, when somebody said, "can I use parts of *NetSeduction* in a performance?", it turned out to be a very text and graphic-based performance which happened. I watched the video of it and was quite amused by it – in a good way. But for me, going beyond text, going into graphics, people often ask me what I want to see in performances in Second Life for example, um, I love Joseph's treadmill and I want a full-body treadmill basically, I want to be able to do motion-capture so I can do any kind of movement to represent my body in the virtual world. I think we're moving more to that, and yet people are still continuing with text-based and playing with that, and I think that's interesting, parallel performance styles that are happening.

JDL: That's a fascinating question. Something that I think is really intense is that if you look at things like Facebook and Twitter, it's mostly text-based still: you've got a lot of pictures and things but it's curious when you think about kids texting and all of that. I don't think that text is going away necessarily. In gaming online and Second Life and elsewhere there's now voice chat capability. But it seems that the voice is more intrusive than texting. I have avoided doing voice-based performances in shooter games specifically because I think it takes one out of the game-space in a really dramatic way, while using text is a little bit more subtle and can almost be unnoticed in those spaces; more adhering to the screen. I find that more interesting. But I think that issue of text, of the written word, has been primal.

AJ: I don't have anything super-special to add on top of what Joseph said, I agree with all of that, and basically it was already out-dated in some ways when we started doing it, because we're all living in the future and the past at the same time. Part of it for me is always about who gets to connect, and what actually is happening with the connection is really one of the most important things for me. I'm always using things that other people consider totally degraded, like not the next-next-next new thing, because I really want people in Iraq to be able to go to an internet cafe and dial in and be on the dance floor of this thing I'm mixing, and that's the imagination of what could happen. I'm always trying to figure out things that just anybody can access, and that always ends up being things that aren't necessarily the bleeding edge of where the technology's at.

JDL: I was reading this week in one of my seminar classes about Joseph Weisenbaum's Eliza, from back in the 60s, and how incredibly powerful that was as just this text-based interaction. And if you imagine Eliza as this sort of virtual therapist being an avatar that was animated doing the same thing, I don't think people would have responded to it in the same way. There is something really powerful about text as implying some kind of a presence that's different from the visual.

VS: The magic circle isn't broken, is it, when you insert text, as when you have voice or the visual representation of things that are in a virtual environment. Here's another question from the audience: "Could the work ever be without text, purely visual and appeal across language barriers like silent cinema?" And I see Adriene nodding so I'll let you jump in first with that.

AJ: Auriea this morning presented their work *The Endless Forest,* and you can think of the Sims too, there's just those sounds. So absolutely, non-verbal communication is really important too. You can get very sophisticated interactions, certainly they're not ones that depend on language so they're really different but theatrically or performatively or artistically there are a lot of things you could do that way, that would be very pleasurable, good, in terms of communication.

SS: I really like the idea of very visual things. I've seen some machinima, films made in Second Life for example, music-based, lots of movement, using the camera in different ways to create moods and so on, so I think there's a great untapped area there that we haven't even started to look at. I've seen some dance performances in Second Life and I've always been somewhat disappointed by them – people see avatars bouncing around and they get really excited, but they're just basic animations strung together and I think we can do a lot more with using the camera the way cinema developed and using lots of visuals. It can be an amazing place.

JDL: There was a question before about crossing borders in terms of language barriers. One of the things I did after the Gandhi walk actually, Gandhi came back to Second Life to re-enact Gandhi's prison sentence. A month after the salt march he was imprisoned for nine months, so I put Gandhi confined in a reproduction of his prison cell for nine months and eventually did daily text readings from the Bush-era torture memos, one reading a day for about seven of those nine months. Part of that performance was actually live through a gallery in Peru where they had set up a kiosk where Gandhi who was in his cell 24/7 in Second Life was there in the gallery space. People could come and interact as an avatar that was set up in the gallery as one of his guards. And it was really cool because we had a translation programme set up for the texting so I could actually communicate with local people coming in; so I think that Second Life does have that capability which is quite interesting.
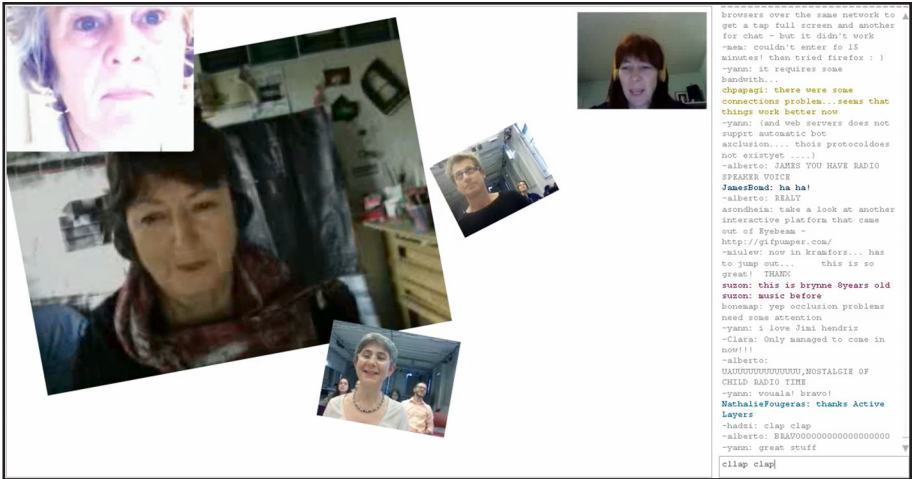
Re–Calling Home!

ActiveLayers

In their CyPosium presentation, the globally-distributed group ActiveLayers (Liz Bryce, NZ; Cherry Truluck, UK; Suzon Fuks and James Cunningham, Australia) recalled their multi-platform cyberperformance Calling Home!*, created in 2008 and remounted in December 2012 for the 121212 UpStage Festival. The following text is a collage of excerpts that expands on themes in their presentation and that recurred throughout the CyPosium. The presentation text is indicated with the time, in square brackets, of each excerpt in the recording; audience questions and excerpts from the discussions are indented.*

Introduction

[4:12]
James: We will chronicle the development of the 3-part work *Calling Home!*, created in 2008 using UpStage. We will describe our collaborative process, the challenges encountered and how we addressed them, how our diverse backgrounds influenced our processes, the development of the story and characters, the specificities of the three parts and ways in which we tried to engage audiences and challenge the mediums used. Cherry couldn't be here for the presentation so she recorded her comments.

Cherry: Hi! I am Cherry. I came from a background in architecture and later in set and costume design for theatre. I indulged my love of theatre and performance by completing an MA in the visual language of performance. I'm interested in the spaces in which performances occur, whether actual or virtual, and how the performer interacts with or responds to the space.

Liz: Kia Ora. I'm Liz. I am a visual artist and live in Kawerau, New Zealand. At

the time of this work I was in Dunedin and teaching in the design department at the Otago Polytechnic. For me the exciting part of this project was creating 'something' from nothing – no theme, no reference – just the commitment to devise 'a show' with other artists.

Suzon: I am a multi/inter-media artist. I was born in Brussels and now live in Australia. I come from a performing and visual art background. As co-artistic director of Igneous,[1] I created the projections and directed all its productions. I am the initiator and co-founder of Waterwheel. We decided to become ActiveLayers when we started working on this project. I was excited by each one bringing different skills, and artistic and cultural perspectives – adding layers to our collaboration.

James: I have a background in contemporary dance, having completed an advanced certificate and working with various professional companies. My longest collaboration has been with Suzon, creating stage shows, site-specific performances, video-dances and online works. I've been a 'go-between' for a number of Tap events, linking online and on-site artists and presenters. My current interests are audience engagement and performative presence in non-performance spaces or situations.

The collaborative process

[7:54]

Liz: We began the process on Skype. This is where we talked about how we were going to approach this work.

Suzon: To generate ideas we spent many sessions brainstorming, discussing and playing. We experimented with the idea of 'booth' – a restricted space, a functional and intimate booth – maybe like a confessional.

Cherry: In January 2008, I emailed this provocation about 'home' to the other three: "So I started thinking about us working together and being so far apart – and the things to do with identity and memory that we were talking about. Where I finally rested, was the idea of 'home' and specifically calling home, that moment of contact. If everyone could put together about 30 secs worth of something – audio/ video/animation/whatever as long as it is time-based. The provocation is 'calling home' – perhaps this is about being far from home or about home as a concept rather than a place – made of memories, people, conversations etc."

Liz: All of us made movie clips of some sort. We then swapped them with each other – to make a new character.

Suzon: Cherry's ticking pendulum became my Grand Uncle character. James calling home on his mobile phone became Cherry's Michael Finch. Liz's green bush and family laughter became James' Heather Smith, and Suzon's photos of family, disrupted and traumatized by war, were the basis of Liz's elusive Esmé.

James: We each wrote a character outline for our newly formed characters.

Suzon: We decided to have a roster for preparing a session or two. Each one had their own agendas but was quite interesting how it fed the group.

Liz: A kind of agreed format evolved for meetings, with an established focus for each director followed by an evaluation of each session.

James: In my directed session I used the improvisation technique *Theatre Of*

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1 Igneous, http://igneous.org.au/ (accessed August 12, 2013).
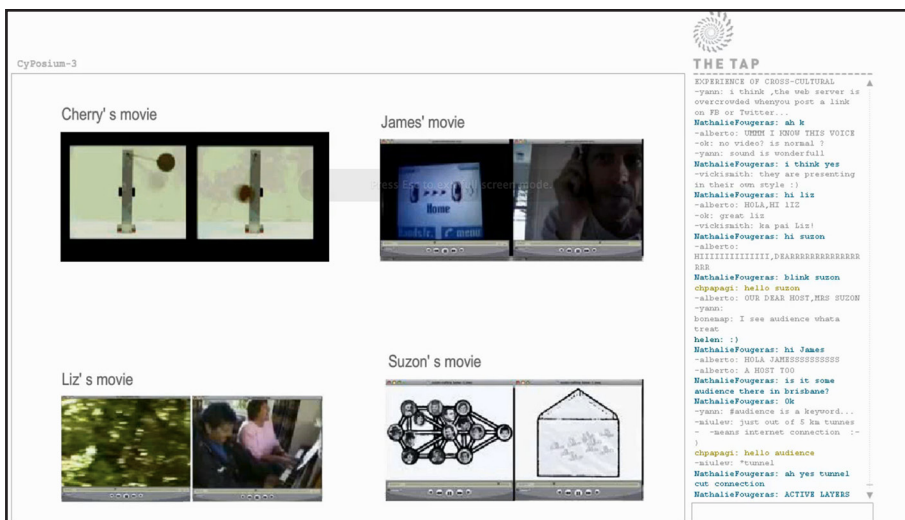
Screengrab by Suzon Fuks of presentation showing stills from the movie responses to Cherry's initial provocation, 2012. © ActiveLayers.

The Ordinary as taught by Al Wunder.[2] There are three main components to the process – improvised play on specific 'scores' (for example "make sentences of only 5 words"), articulating taste through Positive Feedback, and open improvised performances.

Suzon: We periodically reflected on what we were doing, providing feedback immediately – or writing them by email. We watched rehearsal recordings and took some screengrabs in order to share strong moments, which defined our aesthetic.

James: I used an online software for amalgamating faces at faceresearch.org to create the unique fictional faces of the characters.

Liz: We were intending to draw live during the show, because we observed that the act of drawing was compelling for the audience to watch. We wanted to have a continuity of aesthetic. We chose to use the UpStage drawing tool, and to give the drawings a uniform 'look', we created avatars and objects by outlining photographs. We found that the sound and tone of digital voices was annoying for many people so we added pre-recorded sounds, and clips of speech for our characters.
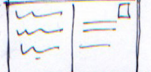
> [24.38]
> Audience question: Did you write your performance before playing it?
> Suzon: yes – we improvised and then selected some bits that we collated; but not all of it.
> James: Cherry came with a proposition of a script – you saw a couple of pages of that script in a draft form, very early on after various improvisations and discussions on the subject. And on the way we created the characters and then she put together a story that could fit across the four stages.
> Suzon: We had landmarks and themes, but the third part is really

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2 Al Wunder, *The Wonder of Improvisation* (Wunder Publishing Company, 2006); www.theatreoftheordinary.com/ (accessed August 12, 2013).

	Finch (CT)	Grand Uncle (SF)	Heather (JC)	Esme (LB)
7		d.	today I got a postcard from a girl called esmé. she wants to be my friend. her sister sent photos of the postcard to me by email! then I emailed her sister and said I'd like to be esmé's friend. My dad reckons she lives in Europe. how cool is that!	
8	before my time i'm afraid. uncle you are very old. Finch is talking to radio – click radio go to uncle stage? i'd like to be transparent. travelling means abandoning your home	latest album, woodstock big jam, before the final jamming act. an incredible dreamer with beats! well he had no home. much like me, i think. unrooted poor guy as many. in the past you could not change look or be transparent so having home was important. nowawdays travelling means no home.	Pre-drawing? (game as Esme's drawing) Draw Esme's home and place Heather av. in it... change background posters & Erase drawing. Postcard to Esme: hi do I know you? i don't think i do. my name is heather smith. i live in the south, near the railway crossing	Receives postcard from Heather. CUt? turn on then delete drawing gradually a background

Excerpt of first script, Calling Home: Getting to Know One Another. *© Cherry Truluck 2008.*

improvised a lot.

 James: Yes the third part; but the first part was pretty set, the script – each of us developed more of a script for our characters' stages. Not completely, but generally.

 Liz: Often we developed our character's script without knowing what the others were doing with their characters.

Intimacy

[12:00]

 Suzon: The immediacy of being in the same space, face to face, showing what you think, is pretty important in collaborative work. It gives a dynamic. Here in cyberspace, it has to bend to patience – because of lag, technical difficulties, differences of places, environments ... sometimes the dynamic is really scattered ... toilet break, accident in the courtyard, bad news phone calls, visitors ...

Discussion of intimacy in Block 3 discussion [8.50]:

> James: There was a certain intimacy at one moment I felt, when we first shared video. Cherry had that provocation for us to come up with some video based on the idea of 'calling home', and then we met and explained what our responses were, which were all video responses, but in doing that very quickly we got to know some personal and intimate details about each other.
> Suzon: Our backgrounds, really.
> Annie: But the question I think which lies behind it is, does collaborating or being together, using this kind of media and instruments and computers, is it a special kind of intimacy? Do you

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have any idea about that?

James: It is something special, because it felt more of a boundary to cross, to share those details with people that you'd never met before. Actually we, Suzon and I, had not met Liz or Cherry for quite a while into our collaborative process.

Suzon: We have only ever met Cherry.

James: As have many online collaborators – they have not ever met physically.

Suzon: Not just with ActiveLayers but with other people, I think I got to know quite a lot about my collaborators, really intimately – maybe much more than if I had been on the floor with them for a theatre production.

Structure

[12:40]

James: *Calling Home!* was created in three parts. The first part, *Calling Home: Getting to Know One Another*, was made to be included in the Mediatised Sites Festival in Newcastle UK in April 2008. Part two, *Calling Home: Staying in Touch*, spanned the time between April and August in which we attempted to build audience relationships, and Part 3, *Calling Home: The Big Get-together* was presented in the 080808 Upstage Festival in August.

Let's look more closely at the three parts.

Part 1: *Calling Home: Getting to Know One Another*

Suzon: An early version of the script shows each character having a column and rows to indicate simultaneous actions.

James: In the foyer of the main festival site were four computers and monitors next to each other, each one logged in as audience to a different UpStage stage dedicated to one of the four *Calling Home!* characters. Online audiences elsewhere were instructed at the beginning of the show to open four windows in their browsers to follow the action across these stages simultaneously.

Liz: Having four stages operating simultaneously was a challenge (we as performers could not see the other stages unless we opened them in tabs, or each stage in a separate window), but we could hear the progress of uncle's show and could adjust our own stage performance accordingly. The voices from other stages (voices of avatars on each stage) guided or conducted the audience between the four stages.

Part 2: *Calling Home: Staying in Touch*

James: Over a period of three months we used a range of methods to build audience for the final part, as well as developing the story and intrigue.
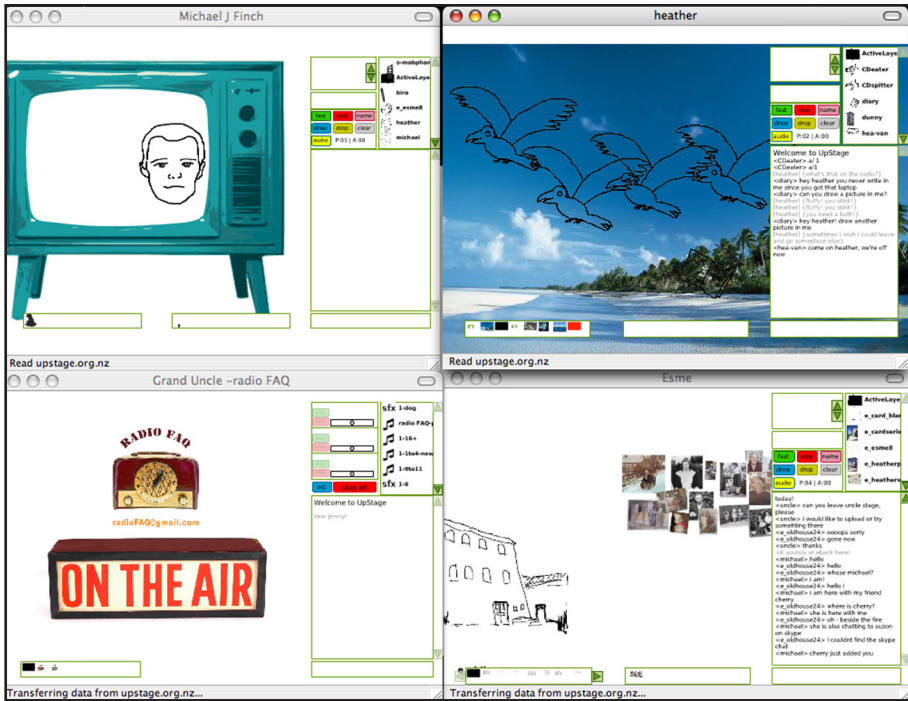
Screengrab by Suzon Fuks of the four stages simultaneously, in Part 1, 2008. © ActiveLayers.

Suzon: Cherry created Finch's blog along with a scenario of fictitious drawings that were supposedly found in various places around the UK.

James: Heather, an eight year old girl from New Zealand, had a blog too and a Gmail account. She would have had a Facebook page but she was too young.

Liz: Each character developed by itself with its own creator. For example, I supported Esmé's character with an imagined family, based in European countries over decades of war. It was based on Suzon's video clip, my in-laws, friends' stories, war books, films, research, and oral histories. But Esmé was so elusive that even I (Liz) could not 'see' her. So Esmé began to exist through her sister Gisela's search for her on Gisela's blog.

Suzon: Doug Leonard, a theatre director/performer from Brisbane took on the role of Grand Uncle. We were literally on the back deck working together - James, Doug and I. Doug read some info about Jimi Hendrix that I had gathered. We organised some interviews on Skype with Grand Uncle on the deck, and some people who were relating or not to our characters. Interviews influenced the overall story and other characters influenced the interviews. They were improvising on the score imagining that they were fans of Grand Uncle's talk show Radio FAQ. It was lots of fun. The editing of the interviews influenced all of the characters and the overall story.

Part 3: *Calling Home: The Big Get-Together*

James: We will re-perform it for the *Walking Backwards into The Future* part of the 121212 Upstage Festival, as homage to Doug who has since passed away.

The public is where in this contract?

Excerpt from the discussion with James Cunningham (JC), Suson Fuks (SF) and Liz Bryce (LB), facilitated by Annie Abrahams (AA).

AA: A question from the audience: can you discuss the importance of audience in your performance?

JC: Yes. In the third part, there wasn't very much of an interactive element, but the public certainly had to interact in the first part. They had to negotiate a new UpStage situation. They had to maintain four open stages at the same time.

SF: Well, they were interacting with each character. The very first part is really like you have four different countries or islands where each character was, and the audience were hopping in these islands and chatting sometimes or not. It depends on the character, if they were available to chat. Grand Uncle at times was just typing in the chat.

Screengrab by Cherry Truluck from ActiveLayers' web site, 2008. © Cherry Truluck.

Liz: Actually there's quite a lot that we discussed and wrote about this, so that came into that second part. We were really conscious of wanting to engage the audience more, because quite often you could see that there were large numbers in the audience, but nobody was saying a lot. We also felt that there was a big audience out there that should be able to be swept into UpStage and interact with us. So the second part, which was what we developed by ourselves, was to try and contact this imagined huge number of interesting people around the world that would love to come and see us. So the blogs partly did that. We advertised on all the digital web sites that we knew had members interested in digital media and performance. We set the blogs up to work with people who might be curious. We actually sent out real invitations, I tried to distribute some around Dunedin in places that may capture a new media audience. We were trying to bring the audience in, and then, getting them to react by going and following the blog and seeing what was happening online. But the reality is a little bit different.

SF: It looks maybe linear the way that we packaged the report of the work. I think the work is more than that – it talks better than us.

Excerpts from the audience chat accompanying the above discussion about the role of the audience.

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bonemap: I don't understand – if we invite an audience into our
spaces, don't they become a part of the work. The public is
where in this contract?
Helen: for me also, the audience completes the work
marc: depends who the audience is!
Helen: it isn't finished without the audience
alberto: SURE.AUDIENCE CAN CHAT AND PARTICIPATE
asondheim: A lot of avant-music has literally no audience at
all but can still be fantastic
mem: "we love our audience"
isabel: sometimes the work really is made only for an active
participant audience
asondheim: @JamesBomd: What are you doing in the bush???
helen: I suppose another way to describe performance is an
action with intention
yann: #audience is the pilot on the net, and in a society
driven by statistics
JamesBomd: @asondheim: intentional action
Clara: I agree
Helen – the audience is part of the work, has to be...
marc: no audience, no critique!
Jrd2U: this is going the wrong way
vickismith: james, your audience was your doctor looking at the
xray scan
helen: no audience, no conversations
asondheim: helen, every action has an intention – it becomes
circular, I intend to do a performance, therefore...
MaJaSo: or maybe james, it's a performance but not (yet)
artistic one.
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mem: no audience - no statistics!
bekih: I think the idea of ritual fulfills the requirement of the performance without audience because it is a performance thats intention is to reveal something to the performer
helen: no audience, no applause
Jrd2U: if you start performing for yourselves
NathalieFougeras: well presenters were discussing between them, so we're alternativally presenters and audience
chpapagi: no audience no performance
JamesBomd: breaking my arm was not intentional, vicki
alberto: if we have no audience, WILL BE AND STUPID AND EGOCENTRIC CONVERSATIONs
helen: maybe james in the bush is performing ritual, rather than giving a performance?
vickismith: but an outcome of your performance?
isabel: this is old from the happenings :D
klo: but who is audience
MaJaSo: the public as performer, real partners.
Chpapagi: spectactor
JamesBomd: helen, I think of it as a performative action but not as "giving" a performance
marc: audience is part of the art & context!
Helen: intermedial audience!
isabel: YES!
mem: yes, engagements in auditorium
Jrd2U: bravo marc
NathalieFougeras: some artists were working against approvement of the audience
yann: interaction does not exist there are only some power quota
asondheim: this has been done many times, even the Living Theater for example
Avatar13: I saw their real performances and felt like being inside the performances
suzon: marc: yes... but we are still all, no matter which space, exploring the engagement/agency of audience
bonemap: Joseph DeLappe works are really about the public – but other works about intimacy require the audience to choose to participate. In Joseph DeLappe work the public have no choice because it engages with the cycles of mass media feed and consumption.
lucillecalmel: at the beginning of webperformance, I felt like I was doing radio broadcast live
asondheim: this stuff is from the 60s – I'd add Gerd Stern's work, maybe Bread and Puppet Theater, lot of things I saw
vickismith: yes the proximal and remote audience are different – it is interesting where they meet
alberto: MAYBE AUDIENCE IS NOT APPROPRIATE WORD
helen: always technical … challenges! ;)
marc: it's also about breaking down the concept of 'genius'
alberto: WE MUST FIND SOME WORD REPLACE AUDIENCE
klo: maybe to create audience?
NathalieFougeras:and breaking down the concept of

"participation"
helen: in french you don't go to "watch" a show, you go to
"assist"
chpapagi: audience are replaced by participants
suzon: well audience and chat are two strange words
vickismith: great term
mem: you sitting in audience, and figure out in some moment that
live art encyclopedia is sitting the next seat
helen: we are all "assistants" here
helen: intermedial assistants
alberto: YESSSSSSSSSSSS, ASSISTANTS
helen: ok we have redefined ourselves! :)
chpapagi: in greek the audience word is the public
helen: also in german & danish
bonemap: yes bonemap audiences are participants and the
scenography is responsive to their presence
alberto: NO IN SPANISH
Clara: and in Portuguese – o publico
suzon: being together online with audience
chpapagi: in greek it also means that they have something in
common
hadzi: I enjoy this discussion from my living room

The Metaphorical Basis of Perception in Intercultural Networked Improvisation

Roger Mills

This article is an amalgam of Roger Mills' CyPosium presentation, and his continuing research of intercultural interaction in networked improvisation. It was written with the intention of formalising the CyPosium presentation[1] and incorporating developing research, while critically addressing some of the questions and comments made by the networked audience.

Introduction

Network technology and high-speed broadband provide unprecedented opportunities for hitherto improbable collaborations between cross-cultural artists and musicians in geographically dispersed locations. This has created a platform for distributed networked performance events that feature a range of innovative interdisciplinary audio-visual performance scenarios, many of which fall outside of a traditional audience-focused paradigm. To some extent this also reflects the nature of experimental art practices, and no more so than with freely improvised music. Networked improvisation shares many similarities with its co-located other, often occurring in ad-hoc groupings of musicians for spontaneous, or prearranged unrehearsed improvisation sessions. However, it is the opportunities for shared pedagogical engagement between geographically dispersed musicians from diverse cultural and musical traditions that delimit co-located from dislocated

1 CyPosium presentation www.cyposium.net/selected-presentations/mills/#recording (accessed September 1, 2013).

improvisatory practices. Low latency, high fidelity network audio interfaces enable global musicians with access to domestic broadband speeds to improvise with musicians that they would never otherwise have an opportunity to engage with. Unless performances are streamed as an internet broadcast, audiences for such events are often just the participating musicians themselves. Critical evaluation of the resulting music and interaction is often reliant on self-reflection and collective appraisal, which can fall beneath the radar of a wider audience of practitioners and theorists. The result is that developments in experimental practices can fail to be fully evaluated in terms of the creative contribution they can make to networked music making, as well as to the discipline of improvisation itself. This neccessitates a greater understanding of the ways in which dispersed musicians interact in networked improvisation, and the musical and cognitive strategies they develop to navigate this liminal telematic experience, without the expressive signifiers of body language and facial expression that are present in co-located interaction.

As a first step, the research outlined in this article demonstrates the application of a social semiotic, multimodal analytical framework to analyse two case studies of intercultural tele-musical improvisation. The framework has been developed from case study research employing multimodal discourse analysis,[2][3][4] and methodologies from the related fields of cognitive linguistics and cognitive musicology.[5][6][7][8] The blending of these methodologies enabled an examination of expression and interpretation in networked improvisatory dialogues, as well as shining a light on the ways in which musicians experience and perceive networked collaborative interaction. The analysis also illustrated emerging approaches and strategies that musicians develop to negotiate sometimes unfamiliar musical terrain. This can be observed in networked musicians' "direct manipulation"[9] of parameters of sound such as timbre, texture, articulation and tempo, foregrounding intention and response within the interaction itself. Recurring groups of sound become "prototypes of causation"[10] which form patterns of recognition, or 'gestalts' in the minds of the musicians. It is by identifying these patterns in the musicians' reflective experiences and mapping them to instances of melodic, harmonic or rhythmic interaction that we develop a picture of causation in networked improvisation.

2 Gunther R. Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen, *Multimodal Discourse : The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication* (London, New York: Arnold; Oxford University Press, 2001).
3 J. Lemke, "Multimodal Genres and Transmedia Traversals: Social Semiotics and the Political Economy of the Sign," *Semiotica* 173, no. 1-4 (Feb 2009): 283-97.
4 Kay L. O'Halloran, "Multimodal Discourse Analysis," in *Companion to Discourse*, eds. K. Hyland and B. Paltridge (London and New York: Continuum: 2011), 120-138.
5 George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1980).
6 Mark Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2008).
7 Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind : The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1987).
8 Steve Larson, *Musical Forces: Motion, Metaphor and Meaning in Music* (Bloomington and Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2012), 29.
9 George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 14.
10 Ibid, 69.

Melody, harmony and rhythm

Viewed through a social semiotic perspective, musical aspects such as melody, harmony and rhythm are considered "semiotic resources"[11] that signify experiential meaning potential either individually, or in combination. For example, a rising pitch contour can signify excitement and anticipation, while the tempo or meter of an underlying rhythm pattern will shape the movement of the melody and the overall significance of that musical event. Parameters of sound such as the timbre of the melody, or the accent or meter of the rhythm pattern, play crucial meta-functional roles in musical signification, and manipulation of these parameters can vastly change the resulting musical output. Unlike the arbitrary relation of signifier to signified in verbal language, proposed by Ferdinand de Saussure[12] and later characterised by Hjelmslev as "expression and content",[13] this relationship in music is not seen as arbitrary: "expression and content are inseparably connected with each other. The slightest change on the level of expression produces a change in content as well."[14] Interacting in an opaque networked environment, the ways in which networked musicians perceive this change can be comprehended through their physical experience of those qualities of sound: by their knowledge of what it is to produce that sound with their voice and bodies.[15] This is viewed as "experiential meaning potential."[16] In other words, networked musicians' perception of sound in musical interaction is schematically structured by related physical experience, which is integral to their musical expression, interpretation and responses.

Case studies of networked performance

One of the difficulties in telematic research is that the researcher is unable to be present in more than one location being studied. While network technology eliminates distance in physical space, interaction occurs at the nexus of a physical location and multiple non-visual, spatially and temporally dislocated environments, traversing diverse social and cultural domains. Acknowledging the many innovative projects employing video streaming on high-speed research networks, the focus of these case studies is on networked jam sessions made possible with a variety of domestic broadband speeds and technologies. The studies are conducted through the proprietary software interface eJamming,[17] which provides musicians with imperceivable latency at the cost of a live visual streaming application. With this in mind, the author agrees with Schroeder and Rebello (2009) that despite the desire

11 Theo van Leeuwen, *Speech, Music, Sound* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 4, 46.

12 Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in general linguistics* (London: Fontana, 1974).

13 Louis Hjelmslev, *Prolegomena to a Theory of Language* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961), 48.

14 Eero Tarasti, *A Theory of Musical Semiotics: Advances in Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 11.

15 George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 69.

16 Ibid.

17 eJamming, "Network Interface", Official Website, http://ejamming.com (accessed September 1, 2013).

for a networked audio-visual unity, tele-conferencing visual exchange still "places the body at the outside as an onlooker," which "misrepresents crucial performative aspects in music-making."[18] In this sense, the networked musician can only 'look at the network' rather than experience the interactive 'embodied presence' of her collaborators. The tele-improvisatory experience is mediated by aural perception and imagination, which is often a new experience for many first time networked musicians. Difficulty conceptualising and describing this scenario, and drawing theoretical or ethnographic meaning from it, is testament to the innate challenges of analysing the resulting musical interaction and the experiences of networked musicians. Yet it is a burgeoning ethno-musical phenomenon that is shaping new practices and improvisatory forms. It could also be argued that the analysis of any one musical, or interactive component in an intercultural improvisation would require it to be examined through multiple, culture specific theoretical frameworks. Satisfying specialists from each of these cultures would likely be as problematic as producing a coherent analysis from the mix of theoretical frameworks themselves. This is not to say that culture does not play a significant role in the analysis but it is treated as a context of situated practice rather than an immutable influence on interpretation and meaning.

The research design therefore focused the analysis on the experiences of an Australian guitarist and his interaction with several cross-cultural musicians[19] of Persian, Asian and European nationalities. The experiences of these musicians was also analysed and cross-referenced with those of the focus musician in tandem to selected musical instances. This not only provided a lens by which to view the interaction, but it also allowed for an understanding of the focus musician's growing familiarity with the networked environment, and the changing nature of the interaction through the different combinations of instruments and musical cultures. Two case studies provide multi-screen clips (Fig. 1) of musicians improvising from the sound studios at the University of Technology, Sydney, Australia, networked to home studios in Germany, Canada and the United Kingdom. While it could be argued that the Western locations in which the studies took place have influenced the cultural attunement of the participating musicians, it was their native cultural and musical traditions that were key to providing culture specific perspectives. It should also be noted that networked musicians do not necessarily perform from within the borders of their home culture. In fact, all but two of the musicians in these studies performed from locations other than their country of origin. It would be exaggerating to describe any of the musicians as part of a diaspora in the countries in which they are domiciled, and to look for any effect or influence is not within the remit of this research. Suffice to say that this can be considered part of the situated, variable, and adaptable characteristics of intercultural music making in that no one group of networked musicians will exhibit the same similarities in their interaction with other cultures, whether located in their home culture or not. However, all of

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18 Franziska Schroeder and Pedro Rebelo, "Sounding the Network: The Body as Disturbant" in *Leonardo Electronic Almanac* 16, no. 4 – (2009): 6.

19 Cross-cultural musician as used here denotes nationality and cultural heritage, rather than to imply a specific form of musical practice.

Fig. 1 Screenshots of networked musicians improvising in distributed geographic locations through the interface eJamming. Used with permission of the artists ©2010 Roger Mills.

Table 1. KPI of participating musicians presentation example *Improvisation 2*					
Musician & reference ID	Nationality	Instrument	Location	Date	Local time
Michael Hanlon ID = MH	Australian	Guitar + electronic effects	UTS, Multimedia lab CB.3.4.10	22/1/2012	14:00
Shaun Premnath ID = SP	Malaysian	*Tabla*	UTS Sound Studio CB.3.3.17	22/1/201	14:00
Peyman Seyyadi ID = PS	Iranian	Persian *Tanbur*	Home studio, Montreal, Canada	21/1/2012	22:00

the participating musicians were experts[20] in their field. Tables 1 and 2 detail the key performance indicators (KPI) for each case study.

The analysis began by identifying and mapping instances of musical interaction to the reflective experiences of the musicians through transcripts of post performance video cue recall[21] sessions.[22][23] The participants' "instrumental gestures"[24] (physical action concerned with the production of sound) were also examined for their role in communicating meaning through qualities of sound. As the networked musicians were not able to see each other, visual-gestural signification was not a direct component of their own interaction. Following Cadoz (1988) the author argues that instrumental gesture is present in qualities of sound, and experienced, acted upon and reciprocated by participating musicians. The perception of gesture in sound is well acknowledged[25][26][27] and is described by the musicologist Wilson Coker (1972) as the way in which "the attitude, movements, or sounds of one organism affect another; the gesture (signal) of one organism is the stimulus to adjustive behavior (signification) of the other."[28] Cumming (2000) also describes how it is possible that "bodily motion - may account for the felt significance of sound."[29]

Image schematic perception

Image schemas are conceptual structures for the way that we perceive abstract and concrete experiences through our physical experience of the world. It is a term coined by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1987), and has since become central to the field of cognitive linguistics and other related fields "as intuitive and powerful instruments for analyzing the nature of thought and language."[30] In these

20 Expert musicians are defined in this study as having a minimum of 5 years professional experience, or acknowledged as master musicians having studied their instrument at tertiary level, or continuing high-level study with master musicians.
21 Video Cued Recall (VCR): musicians are played a video recording of their performance and asked to stop the video, and to verbalise their experience as they recall it.
22 M. Omodei and J. McLennan, "Studying complex decision making in natural settings: using a head mounted video camera to study competitive orienteering," *Perpetual and Motor Skills* 79, no. 3 (1994): 1411–1425.
23 Bonnie Raingruber, "Video-cued narrative reflection: a research approach for articulating tacit, relational and embodied understandings," *Qualitative Health Research* 13, no. 8 (2003): 1155-1169.
24 C. Cadoz, "Instrumental Gesture and Musical Composition"*,* paper presented to the International Computer Music Conference, Cologne, Germany (1988).
25 Caroline Traube, Philippe Depalle, and Marcelo Wanderley. "Indirect Acquisition of Instrumental Gesture Based on Signal, Physical and Perceptual Information," in *Conference on New Instruments for Musical Expression* (Montreal: Canada, ACM: 2003), 42.
26 George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self and Society*, ed. Charles W. Morris (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934), 68-69.
27 Wilson Coker, *Musical Meaning: A Theoretical Introduction to Musical Aesthetics* (Ontario: Collier-Macmillian, 1972), 10, 55.
28 George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self and Society*, 68-69.
29 Naomi Cumming, *The Sonic Self : Musical Subjectivity and Signification* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 134.
30 Joseph E. Grady, "From Perception to Meaning: Image Schemas in Cognitive Linguistics," in *Cognitive Linguistics Research*, eds. Hampe, Beate. (Berlin; New York: Mouton de Gruter, 2005), 47.

Table 2. KPI of participating musicians presentation example *Improvisation 3*					
Musician & reference ID	Nationality	Instrument	Location	Date	Local time
Michael Hanlon (focus musician) ID = MH	Australian	Acoustic guitar	UTS, Multimedia lab CB.3.4.10	28/1/2012	21:00
Bukhchuluun Ganburged ID = BG	Mongolian	*Morin Khuur* (horse fiddle) Mongolian throat singing	UTS Sound Studio CB.3.3.17	28/1/2012	21:00
Hervé Perez ID = HP	French	Soprano saxophone, *shakuhachi*, Tibetan bowl, Irish *bodhran* drum, percussion and electronic processing	Home studio, Sheffield, United Kingdom	28/1/2012	10:00
Martin Slawig ID = MS	German	Percussion and Max/MSP processing	Home studio, Braunschweig, Germany	28/1/2012	11:00

case studies, they performed a crucial role in the analysis of musicians' reflective experiences when examining transcripts of post performance video cue recall sessions. Through a large body of empirical evidence, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Johnson (1987) argue that metaphor is an embodied imaginative structure of understanding by which "we project patterns from one domain of experience in order to structure another domain of a different kind."[31] Johnson illustrates this with the example of the 'Verticality' schema, which he states:

> ... emerges from our tendency to employ an up-down orientation in picking out meaningful structures of our experience based on spatial orientation metaphors. We grasp this structure of verticality repeatedly in thousands of perceptions and activities we experience everyday, such as perceiving a tree, our sense of standing upright, the activity of climbing stairs, forming a mental image of a flagpole, measuring our children's heights, and experiencing the level of water rising in the bathtub. The 'Verticality' schema is the abstract structure of these experiences, images and perceptions.[32]

How musicians reflect on the abstract (target) domain of musical interaction can be analysed in terms how they project a more concrete (source) domain onto that experience, e.g. the perception of melody in terms of a spatial or orientational metaphor. An example of the pervasiveness of the 'Verticality' schema can be

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31 Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*, xiv-xv.
32 Ibid.

observed at 1:32 in the second of the presentation excerpts (improvisation 3).[33] Focus musician and guitarist MH comments on his perception of the interaction during a climactic section that featured the networked ensemble building intensity through volume, tempo and rhythm. This occurred through an increase in volume and intensity of the ensemble and frenetically bowed *morin khuur* (Mongolian horse fiddle) voicing a fast paced rising melodic line that built tension in the interaction to a final release and conclusion.

> I was thinking 'wow he's going up and up and up, this is great' and […] I stopped just to let him. I just wanted to let this one go. It was just like 'wow', I was just really enjoying the moment, building, building, building, probably took a bit longer than I thought but it was a nice piece of music.

MH not only perceives the intensity of the horse fiddle and ensemble playing structured by 'Verticality' but also the ways in which the direct manipulation of parameters of sound in his own sound contributed to causation in the culminating musical event. The moment of climax and release in the interaction resulted in all of the musicians dropping out at approximately the same time through their perception of changes in the combination of sound parameters. As MH again reflects:

> I think we all knew or felt that that was going to happen there, I don't think I was alone in thinking that this was the end of the piece here.

Spatial orientations have long been employed in the musicological analysis of pitch and harmony, such as the categorisation of vertical or parallel chords, tonal gravity, or the upward to downward movement of melody in small (conjunct) or large (disjunct) steps. This notion of spatiality in how we interpret movement in music is also paralleled in the more recent work of the late musicologist Steve Larson, a colleague and collaborator of Mark Johnson, who argued that our perception of musical motion is shaped by our experience of physical motion "so that we not only speak about music as if it were shaped by musical analogues of physical gravity, magnetism, and inertia, but we also experience it in terms of 'musical forces'."[34] The foundation of Larson's theory is in Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) taxonomy of conceptual metaphor, and develops the proposition that conceptual and experiential schematic structures of perception demonstrate "how we both think and act is fundamentally metaphorical in nature."[35]

Metaphor and culture

Scholarly interest in the application of image schemas and conceptual metaphor

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33 *Improvisation 3*, Excerpt 1 www.youtube.com/watch?v=MXXWVWFL50w (accessed September 12, 2013).
34 Mark Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body*, 2.
35 Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*, xiv.

across cultures[36] [37] continues to be an area of considerable interest, and while this research uncovered individual examples in the musicians' verbalised experiences, it does not claim to present universal relationships of conceptual metaphor across all cultures. Neither does it suggest that networked musicians consciously think in and of these terms of conceptual or experiential signification, but rather that they occur as the result of their actions in practice. However, the embodied nature of conceptual metaphor suggests that it can be instrumental in the examination of cultural analogies, or variations in metaphorically structured perception. As Johnson (2008) argues:

> The grounding of metaphors in bodily experience suggests possible universal structures (of bodily perception and movement) for understanding music […] and since there may be differing cultural interpretations of bodily experience, metaphor provides one important avenue for exploring cultural and historical variation in significantly different conceptions of musical experience.[38]

Further research is required to investigate and taxonomise a full range of experiential metaphors related to networked intercultural musical interaction, and where parallels can be drawn. While these studies take a first step in beginning this process, the metaphorical basis of musical perception across cultures is demonstrated in Feld's (1981) studies of the Kaluli people of New Guinea, who "systematically metaphorize 'water' and 'sound' to express a theory of the form and performance of their vocal music."[39] This also helps to demonstrate that the analysis of schematic structures of imagination is key to understanding networked musicians patterns of experience. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue "metaphor is not merely a matter of language, it is a matter of conceptual structure […] it involves all the natural dimensions of our experience, including aspects of our sense experiences: color, shape, texture and sound. These dimensions structure not only mundane experiences but aesthetic experience as well."[40] Applied to the analysis of networked improvisation, experiential qualities of sound not only structure musicians' perceptions, but also enable a full range of expression and response.

Metaphor and causation

Having discussed the basis of metaphorically structured perception in networked improvisatory interaction, we will now turn to the analysis of causation (musical

36 F. Boers, "Applied Linguistics Perspectives on Cross-Cultural Variation in Conceptual Metaphor, Metaphor and Symbol," *Springer* 18, no.4 (2003): 231-238.
37 Michael Kimmel, "Culture regained: Situated and compound image schemas" in *Cognitive Linguistics Research*, eds. Hampe, Beate. (Berlin; New York, Mouton de Gruter: 2005), 285-311.
38 Mark Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body*, 259.
39 Steven Feld, *Sound and Sentiment-Birds, Weeping. Poetics and Song in Kaluli Expression* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), 22.
40 George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 3.

progression and change). This was achieved through the examination of what Lakoff and Johnson (1980) describe as "prototypes of causation."[41] A prototype of causation is defined by a cluster of components that "recur together over and over in action after action as we go through our daily lives. We experience them as a *gestalt*; that is, the complex of properties occurring together is more basic to our experience than their separate occurrence."[42] For networked improvisers it is the perception of recurring patterns within iconic musical components, e.g. melody, harmony and rhythm that are experienced as '*gestalts*'. They are groups of sound parameters such timbre, texture, pitch, articulation, meter that imbue a melody with its significant qualities. When heard together, patterns within these musical components form parts of a family of sound that create prototypes of causation, for example the musical statement and improvisatory response. The musical statement may feature significant attributes such as homophonic texture, a 'figure' perspective and certain melodic, timbral and rhythmic characteristics dependent on the intended meaning. Likewise the intended response will contain the requisite semiotic resources for the same experiential purpose. It is a melody played in a particular key, with a particular rhythm and timbre, that is being recognised as part of a group of sounds through its composite of sound parameters. A musician can directly manipulate these parameters or "surface qualities"[43] to bring about change in the music's form. However, direct manipulation is not limited to purely iconic musical parameters, but also applies to real-time fluctuations of sound qualities within an on-going interaction. For example, if a violinist plays a series of high pitched plucked harmonics in G major, she will create a pattern of features, e.g. timbral percussiveness, high frequency (pitch), short attack (articulation), regular or unmetered rhythm and consonant harmony that create a pattern of resemblances leading to formation of a '*gestalt*' in her own mind, and the minds of the improvising musicians. This may then trigger a particular response to those prototypes, such as lower pitched, long note durations that will scaffold the higher, more percussive timbres that are being voiced by the violin. Interacting musicians may then manipulate the tonality, texture or timbre within their own playing to affect further change in a fluid networked jam session.

In the first of the two presentation excerpts (improvisation 2),[44] guitarist MH describes how he perceives the percussive timbral qualities of *tabla* and Persian *tanbur*, which resulted from recurring patterns of sound produced by the two instruments. This can be viewed as creating a '*gestalt*' of 'percussiveness' that then shaped his response through his direct manipulation of sound qualities in his own playing. This is then expressed not only in the music but also in his reflective comments:

> It's a broad bed of sound that doesn't really have a melodic structure, I think that's what I was looking for there. I had heard the other two instruments and one is obviously percussive instrument, and the other was still very percussive in its playing, very sharp in its notes, and I

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41 Ibid, 235.

42 Ibid, 69.

43 Wilson Coker, *Musical Meaning: A Theoretical Introduction to Musical Aesthetics,* Collier-Macmillian Ontario, 1972 p. 55.

44 *Improvisation 2*, Excerpt 1 www.youtube.com/watch?v=mWdHnM4InFk (accessed September 12, 2013).

guess I was dropping down in registers just searching for that place where it felt good for the three of us.

MH conceived of wanting to "start with something low, to create a bed" of sound with the sound of the guitar. His perception of a composite of 'percussiveness' in the other instruments timbre represented height in sound (frequencies) that he felt needed to be complimented with a lower sound. Structured by metaphors of 'Verticality', his cognitive response was to situate his sound underneath the interaction with something 'low', which he did with soft timbral playing that was low in both pitch and volume. A musical response such as this is viewed as emerging out of prototypical causation as the result of direct manipulation, e.g. his changing to a lower pitch and volume to situate his sound with the higher 'percussive' timbres of the *tabla* and *tanbur*. Manipulation of sound in this manner is viewed as 'instances of making' where, as a result of the manipulation, the object (music) is perceived as having changed form. As Lakoff and Johnson argue, they are "elaborated by metaphor to yield a broad concept of causation, which has many special cases."[45]

In the second example of improvisation 3,[46] another example of causation is illustrated in the opening moments of the clip. It occurred as guitarist MH resonated a continuing tone on G in an instrumental gesture of moving his finger over the string on the fret board, creating an undulating tone with a metalic timbre. He then manipulated this sound by adding a series of plucked harmonics in G that moved into an ostinato rhythmic sequence, establishing the tonic key and a common 4/4 meter. After record enabling the software Max/MSP (Cycling 74) on his laptop, sonic artist MS used brushes to beat an area on the top of a metal gong, which was then sampled and processed through the software, producing a shimmering granulated sound. *Morin khuur* (horse fiddle) player BG contributed to this timbral collage of metallic sound by sliding his finger down the neck of the fiddle, producing a descending glissando wire-like timbre. At this point, all of the instruments were interlocking in a diffused interaction occupying a 'field' like aural perspective, in other words no one instrument was dominating or leading. However, it is through this combination of recurring patterns of sound that we can perceive causation in the music, which occurred as the horse fiddle player BG moved from the sliding glissando to long sustained bowed notes, which created a sense of undulating movement in the music. As he reflected, it was through his perception of the qualities of the sound at this moment that effected change in his playing:

I tried sliding down the neck of the fiddle while the other musicians were playing. I was just kind of experimenting to see how it would go […]. Martin started with some sounds that impressed me that were quite unusual, strange […] and I was impressed by that, so I then started to join in there.

While causation occurs as the result of the musicians' manipulation of sound qualities, the complexity of this experience is matched by a complex mix

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45 George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 71.
46 *Improvisation 3*, Excerpt 2 www.youtube.com/watch?v=mUEF8cIdqNE (accessed September 12, 2013).

of metaphors structuring the musicians' perception. As 'Verticality' maps our physical spatial experience onto our perception of a musical melody or sound, there are a group of metaphors that allow us to perceive and categorise parts of our lived experience. These are ontological metaphors such as 'Substance', 'Object', 'Container', with which "we can identify our experiences as entities or substances, we can refer to them, categorize them, group them, and quantify them – and, by this means reason about them."[47] The 'Container Object' metaphor is perceived as "a bounding surface" with an "in-out orientation"[48] in which you can perform an activity as a 'Substance'. Ontological metaphors are used to comprehend events, actions, activities and states, illustrated by a musician (object) entering into a musical improvisation (container), which has a start and a finish as an activity of music (substance). Guitarist MH demonstrates how these metaphors are contributing to his perception of the beginning of the second case study, commenting:

> I felt everyone was just starting slowly, breathing slowly *into it* allowing it to develop […] I started a note that worked and staying down low, which felt like the beat of the piece as it started, kind of searching around still at the beginning.

Once again 'Verticality' was structuring his approach of "staying down low" in the notes that he was playing, but it is the 'Container Substance' of "breathing slowly into it" that were indicative of his perception of the activity he was engaged in. Further examples of this mix of 'Container Object Substance' metaphor can be observed in the perception of soprano saxophone player HP who commented on his more tentative experience of the interaction at this point:

> I think I decided to *come in* gradually with textural sounds to punctuate what was going on. I think in the session I didn't feel I could come straight in […] I *came in* last in the sound check and you seemed to have done some preliminary tests, so for me it took me a while to *get into it*. I wanted to not stay out too long but I just felt that I had to *slip into* the improvisation gradually, hence the kind of textural things I was doing.

Here we can observe examples of the musician perceiving his interaction of entering into the 'Container Object' of the improvisation in which he played textural sounds as 'Substance' in the 'Container' of the music activity. For the electronics and percussion player MS it is the recurring patterns of sound that created the impetus for him to enter into 'Container' of the improvisation (through translation):

> It was based more on impulse. It was almost like the other musicians invited me to *come in* […] through the sound of the instruments, how they are played and the structure of the tones.

MS perceives recurring patterns of sound in the "instruments, in terms of

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47 Gunther R. Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen, *Multimodal Discourse.*
48 Ibid.

how they are played and the structure of the tones" as a '*gestalt*', which forms the causation of an invitation to 'come in' to the improvisation.

These statements all reflect the pervasiveness of metaphorically structured perception and the way that it enables 'Causation' in the unfamiliar musical and cognitive terrain of the embryonic stages of a intercultural tele-improvisation. They are examples of the semiosis of expression and content, and the ways in which this is metaphorically structured in the minds of the musicians. As previously highlighted this is the result of a complex mix of metaphors that are perceived by an equally complex range of "cross-metaphorical correspondences."[49] They demonstrate the experiential basis of distributed creative cognition by which dispersed musicians perceive and respond to embodied representation and meaning in the flow of intercultural networked improvisatory performance.

Discussion

This article has outlined a framework for the analysis of perception and experience in intercultural tele-improvisation. It has demonstrated the ways in which musical parameters such as timbre, meter and articulation form recurring patterns of sound that act as *gestalts* or 'prototypes of causation' to affect change in networked interaction. This can be observed in the audio-visual examples and further corroborated by the verbalised experiences of the participating musicians. Shining a light on the opacity of the telematic environment, image schemas provide a powerful analytical tool to analyse musicians' interaction. However, it is important not to mistake visual representations, or verbal descriptions for the actual image schema itself, which are the result of complex interrelations of physical and abstract domains of experiences, rather than concrete rich images. As has been discussed, spatial orientation and experiential meaning are fundamental to musical semiotics, and they form the basis of the social semiotic perspective taken in these studies.

As highlighted in the CyPosium and UpStage festival,[50] networked music and sound plays a fundamental role in the field of telematic arts, and while much research has focused on the technical aspects of performance and interface design, this article contributes to a more qualitative examination of tele-improvisatory interaction. This is illustrated by the emergent approaches that cross-cultural musicians develop to interact in dislocated and unfamiliar musical terrain, which can then lay the basis of an evaluation of longer-term interactive strategies. Despite the distributed nature of networked practices, as evidenced in the articles in this special issue, there is a large community of artists and researchers dedicated to exploring new forms of innovation. The CyPosium and UpStage Festival of Cyberformance provided unique opportunities to draw together a diverse range of practitioners and cultures to reflect and develop new pedagogies of engagement for artists and audiences alike.

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49 George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 97.
50 UpStage Festival: http://upstage.org.nz/blog/?page_id=3358 (accessed September 12, 2013).
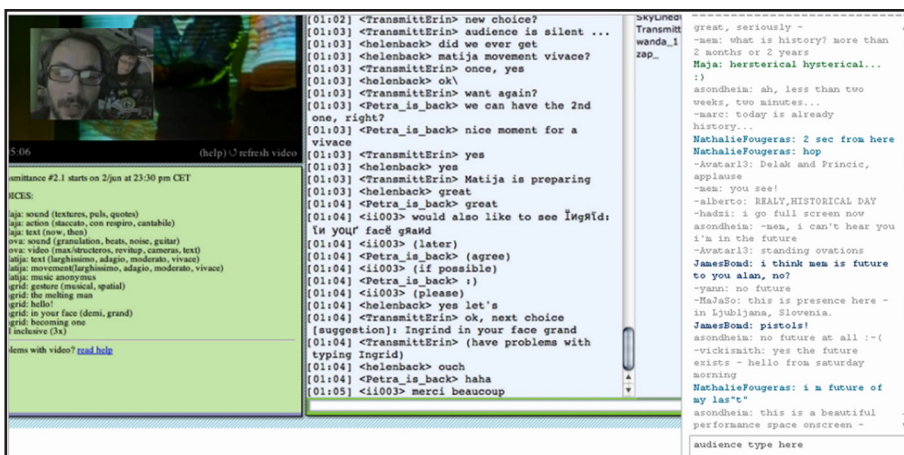
Transmittance:
a Telematic Performance

Maja Delak & Luka Prinčič

This text is the paper which Maja Delak and Luka Prinčič presented along with illustrative images and video. Some of the images are reproduced here.

Transmittance[1] explores collaboration which is local, global, networked and broadcasted. It involves an artistic group of performers, visual artists, musicians and computer programmers to research performative possibilities of streaming, broadcasting and telepresence, forging new types of performance and audience. With a focus on critical and socially-aware artistic languages, this work is based on questions about body, self and society, opening non-dualistic perspectives. The project tries to rethink notions of spectatorship and spectacle, ways of watching and seeing, and the audience as spectators from the outside. Emphasis is made on the creative use of free and open source software and its impact on the artistic process and collaboration. The project has developed a specific method of improvised performance which allows compositional freedom along with specific prepared scenes at the same moment, and in the process different specifics of various artistic media (performance art, expanded cinema, sound art, new media realities) collide.

   Transmittance is a project proposed by Maja Delak & Luka Prinčič and it is developed further in each situation with ongoing collaborators and those who join for one part of the research.

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1 See more on: http://transmittance.emanat.si and http://emanat.si/en/production/ transmittance (accessed August 12, 2013).

Description and locations

The physical setup of *Transmittance* is usually not in a theatre; more often it's a mid-sized hall in an abandoned industrial space – for example the former military barracks Karlo Rojc in Pula, Croatia – or a gallery space. The space usually contains a big projection surface, on which various video and real-time processed visual materials and feeds from small cameras are projected. One or two computer programmers are controlling sound and lights through various means, for example mapping one performer's movement to the amount and colour of light in the space. In the space is a musician with a bass guitar and a laptop, a visual artist using a webcam and an additional projector. Most of the technology faces and embraces a performance area and the projection surface, and opposite this is a big camera and operator. Behind this camera is the proximal audience, who can come and go at any time during the two to three hour performance. A rack of costumes is visible, hats and wigs are hanging from the wall. Some microphones are in use from time to time, there's a lot of sound and music, rarely there is time without projected material, in silence. Three or four performers move, talk, stare, dance, change costumes, read aloud – the whole dramaturgy seems narrative, yet in peculiar way it is not. The performers sometimes talk to the big camera and they seem to follow an invisible pattern, invisible commands. Part of the atmosphere, that can be wild and explosive or a calm, almost dead ambience, is another smaller projection of words, of commands, at one side. From this interface, and the ambience of the physical space, we switch to another interface and ambience: the online space.

At home, a curious person clicks on a link in her browser and a new window opens with three elements: an audio/video stream, a menu of choices and a text chat room. Suddenly she hears sound and can see a camera moving, focusing, zooming out, framing the space, the performers and sometimes even the proximal audience. The chat room is full of people, but not too many. They talk and comment on the content of the stream. Some of the responses are emotional. Somebody with the nickname Moderatorin calls for suggestions from the menu of choices, and after

Physical space, Transmittance #2*, Ljubljana. Photographer: Nada Žgank.*
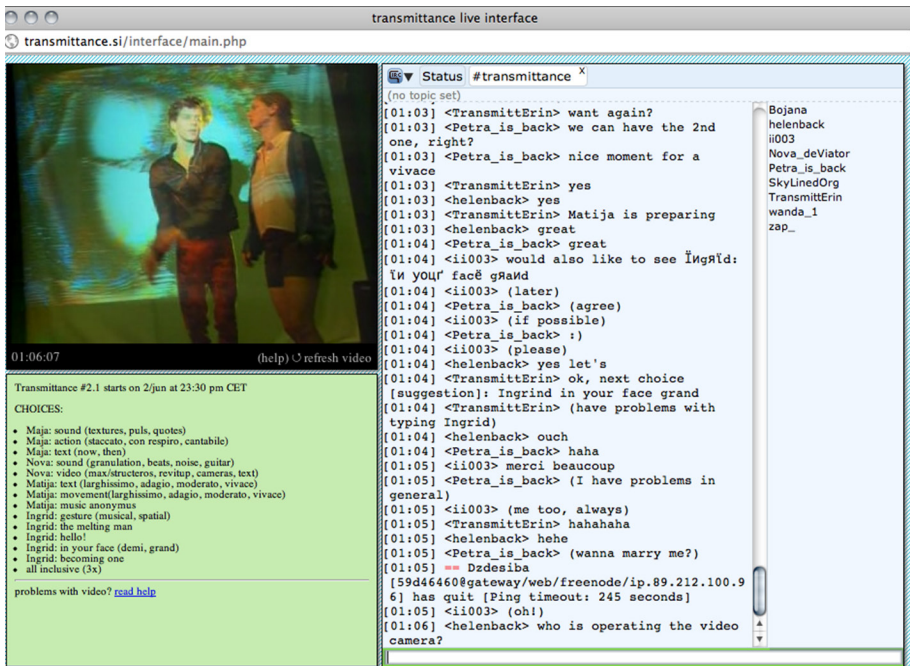
Interface, Transmittance#2.1*, Trouble Festival. Screenshot: Helen Varley Jamieson.*

a short time reports back which choice will happen next. Some of the choices are crossed out. The accepted suggestion is being performed by one of the performers. There is lively and active discussion in the chat room between about 20-30 online audience members. There's music and the show continues.[2]

The creators[3] of *Transmittance* are a mixture of performers, musicians and artists working with video, computer programming and text. Part of the group are also: a 'dedicated online agent', working remotely, from an unknown location, in the chat, fuelling and animating the atmosphere inside the web interface; and a moderator, calling herself Moderatorin – the only one actively present in the physical space and in the online space at the same time – who is crucial for translating the dynamics of chat into the physical space and vice-versa, takes care of the timing between different scenes, depending on their nature (related to either sound, video or movement, or theme – sometimes these can overlap for extended periods of time). She is a live dramaturgical DJ, a 'drama jockey' who mixes and cross-fades performative tracks. Engaged members of the on-line audience are also co-creators of *Transmittance*: their suggestions from the menu of choices give the performers cues and directions for each scene, which is partly predefined and partly improvised. The on-line audience comments on what they see through the stream and some of

2 A short video that partially presents the described situation and goes through three editions of *Transmittance*, Pula, Ljubljana: http://transmittance.emanat.si/cyposium/
3 The list of collaborators in different situations in years 2010-12: Loup Abramovici, Ingrid Berger Myhre, Marko Bolković, Boštjan Božič, Adele Cacciagrano, Maja Delak, Matija Ferlin, Mauricio Ferlin, Rea Korani, Jakob Leben, Tihana Maravic, Silvia Mei, Luka Prinčič, Ana Pečar, Maja Šorli, Igor Štromajer, Samuel Volsten, Fabrizio Zanuccoli, Jelena Ždrale, Nataša Živkovič.

Moderator in Transmittance. *Photographer: Nicolaos Zafiriou.*

this feedback is being projected back into the physical space by the moderator.

Obviously technology plays an important role in telematic performance. However, it cannot be devoid of contextual retrospection. In other words, the perspective on technology is necessarily grounded in media and their histories. Technological invention seems an innocent fact – at first sight. Its introduction into the social and artistic sphere transforms it into one with a necessary political dimension. *Transmittance* uses free and libre open source software whenever possible. All streaming infrastructure, most video and audio processing and the web interface is done using Linux, open standards and patent-free technologies. In fact, there's an inherent understanding that the sharing of code is closely related to methodologies involved in art-making. In the creation process we are making an effort to confront live art practitioners such as performers and musicians with the world of technology and free and libre open source software.

Audience

Working with a streamed performance, using the network as medium for already established performance practices but re-framing them in the light of digital tools of transmission and communication, has allowed us to break away from and rethink established notions of audience and live art practices.

A traditional theatre (dare we say spectacle) functions as a closed structure for both audience and creators into which it is hard to enter. It is a place suitable for programs and coded behaviours that are already decided upon, chosen and clearly prioritised. On the other hand a telematic project like *Transmittance* has the potential to bypass those rigid structures and create different and accessible possibilities for art making and representation, forging a new type of audience on the way.

The research question influencing our process concerns the close interaction with the audience, taking into account the challenge that internet communication and

socialization creates a feeling of intimacy and proximity while perhaps provoking a feeling of loneliness. Does 'having fun on-line' replace the feelings of nostalgia, loneliness and shame?

Looking at the connection between performers, machinery and audience within the setup of *Transmittance*, there are a number of noteworthy constellations of relationships and activities. For example, the roles of the observed and observer change between the performers, the offline audience in space and on-line audience, with the only exception that the on-line audience is never observed. The on-line audience is seemingly the most free of all: its possibility of interaction enables it to choose the level of its engagement – how passive or active it will be. On the other hand, the performance of the physical space has unpredictable dramaturgy and possible unreadability for the off-line audience because the information seemingly circulates between camera, online audience, chat moderator and performers. This highlights the fact that the off-line audience has a different, non-verbal, communication with the performers which in turn creates a relationship in the physical space that is functionally different from that with online audience.

Improvisation

The performers (in the broad sense this can include musicians, computer programmers, sound, video and other media artists) have a particular methodology for improvisation and structuring. In the time before the event, ideally about 10-14 days, performers and audio-visual artists work together on themes and contexts that fuel the generation of movements, texts, imagery and sound material. This time seems crucial for achieving some kind of coherence, blending, resonance and relations within materials themselves, so that they might appear as part of a common story or theme at the actual event. When performers and collaborators change (from event to event, from locality to locality), new methods of non-verbal communication need to be established between creators themselves. Concrete performative materials

Lecture by Marcell Mars. Photographer: Marko Bolković.

– improvisational cues, visuals, sounds, music, text and digital tools are arranged in sets that are given a title, or code word – usually describing it to a certain degree. They are either assigned to a single artist or to the whole group – something called 'all inclusive'. These titles are presented as the menu of choices for the online audience, who make suggestions in the chat room which are decided on by the moderator (the drama jockey). When communicated into the physical space, the performer of the assigned choice is the carrier of that action in the space. Other performers become side-players: they can accompany or contrast her with their own actions or media, or not at all, allowing silence and stillness. The sensibility and responsiveness to the space is crucial here as it is a communal composition, a group show, where each is always aware of the bigger picture. A certain action can be repeated twice during one show, after which it is crossed out. Actions can be mixed or overlap if they are in different media.

A non-trivial question is this: where does the technology end and the thematic work start? We feel that within *Transmittance* there is a strong flux between these two fields. Themes that we proposed as starting points for everyone involved were: shame, co-existence, beside-ness, and online loneliness. Writings on shame by Silvan S. Tomkins via Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick were particularly influential. Kosofsky writes:

> BESIDE is an interesting proposition [...] because there is nothing dualistic about it; a number of elements may lie alongside one another, though not an infinity of them. [...] Beside comprises a wide range of desiring, identifying, representing, repelling, paralleling, differentiating, rivalling, leaning, twisting, mimicking, withdrawing, attracting, warping, and other relations.[4]

Possible choices - performers. Photographer: Nada Žgank.

4 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy*, Performativity (Duke University Press, 2004), 8.

Multiple cameras situation. Photographer: Nada Žgank..

While there is an 'equalised' relationship between all media – that is to say that body movements have no bigger priority than silent sound, for example – the camera work seems to be the most inspirational and thought provoking. Following the idea that increasingly pervasive imaging technologies should be embraced and subverted in order to be observed on our own terms, the camera is not seen as an invisible recording device of objective reality but as apparatus of active subjectification by the subject itself. In other words: we are not shooting a documentary, but we are making a feature film. The camera work also involves experiments and questions of single versus multiple cameras. If a performer is aware of a single camera and its position and direction, she can work with it in a creative way, using compositional techniques such as out-of-frame and depth of the space – and in this way she can control the broadcast. Multiple cameras create a more difficult and complex interaction which needs further research and exploration.

In conclusion, it seems that for us to work within the *Transmittance* framework involves tapping into a special ambience, a feeling that connecting through these devices and bodies brings out expansion of subjective perspectives on the individual and the community. To quote Suzan Kozel speaking about her research including telematics and other computational systems:

> ... just like in life, relationships unfold in diverse directions: toward banality, detachment, control, play, generosity, secrecy, hesitation, exuberance. Each of these computational systems is extraordinarily rich for performance research precisely because they can let emerge latencies within us, levels of intuition and affect, that animate us as human beings. [...] With careful – even sensitive – design, future generations of these systems and devices can expand our social, physical, and emotional exchanges.[5]

5 Susan Kozel, *Closer* (Cambridge: MIT P - Leonardo Book Series, 2007), 307.

Extimacy - Netimacy - Distalimacy

Discussion, Block 3

Excerpt from the discussion at the end of Block 3, with Luka Prinčič (LP) and Roger Mills (RM); facilitated by Annie Abrahams (AA).

AA: I think it's a good moment to ask what kind of intimacy is this kind of performance producing, because that's related to what you were talking about just now. Does it creates intimacy and what kind of?

LP: Well yes actually. The idea for *Transmittance* was born from an accident really, when we tried to create a performance specifically streamed for a specific place, from Ljubljana to Berlin, that it is displayed there and there is an interaction between visitors to the exhibition and us. But then, Berlin's place, they lost internet connection. So we stayed without our audience, really. But we published to our newsletter that we would be doing this, and there is URL where you could watch us. There came about, I think it was less than 10 people to this stream. We had 6 scenes prepared, and it was for solos, the two of us performing but each time one person, and the other person was always chatting with the audience and explaining where the scene is coming from, where this has roots, or explaining the whole context for a certain scene. And suddenly a connection developed with the audience: because the audience knew that they were chatting with a performer, that is not performing at that time, but then later they could see that performer performing, and another performer chatting with them. So there was this really amazing strangely new feeling of connection, intimate connection, from our side and from their side as well, according to the comments. And I think this was what really fuelled, and is still fuelling, why we want to do this.

RM: I am picking up on a comment that Helen made in the chat there, where she was talking about intimacy not necessarily being about knowing things about people, and I think that's a really good comment. Because what we're all talking about in a sense is the intimacy being the art or the music that we're making together and that is providing another layer, which is probably more difficult to describe, of intimacy between us all, when we collaborate.

Excerpts from the accompanying audience chat.

marc: Question: what kind of intimacy happens through the experience of collaborating with others with sound, in a networked

context?
marc: is the networked experience part of intimacy – with distance?
yann: no intimacy on the internet, it's a fake
hadzi: www.goldsmiths.ac.uk/intimacy/symposium.php
helen: this relates also to Auriea's talk
helen: wirefire as a platform for online intimacy
marc: answer: the media creates the intimacy...
yann: sharing video is communication, not intimacy
bonemap: intimately apart
yann: extimacy ? ;-)
vickismith: that is a slow deep intimacy rather than immediacy
klo: netimacy
yann: notimacy
marc: intimacy of the moment, experience, networked – joy of
mutual mediation!
yann: does not exist on networks
helen: it's a different situation for maja & luka as the artists
are in same room but have to develop intimacy with online audience
bonemap: to hear the voice of a lover across the orb of the globe
helen: intimacy is not just about knowing things about people
lucillecalmel: some people talk about extimacy
yann: protimacy
suzon: the love affair?
Suzon: like in wirefire story
marc: net- lovers collide in space ;-)
JamesBomd: distalimacy
hadzi: I like the intimate sound of the student club :)
klo: its nice story are they married in the end?
NathalieFougeras: intimacy : sharing time space
suzon: they have children....
NathalieFougeras: even with people you don't know
marc: feeling the nuances of mutual mediation, as in peer play,
experimentation with others...
yann: no audience anymore
hadzi: is chatting flirting?
ruthie: 'mutual mediation' - it is as if we perform in each
others' dreams – that's a kind of intimacy
lucillecalmel: the best intimacy (no-)performance I lived was
listening to the sound of a (woman I guess) home during hours
while I was working-performing
bonemap: internet is creating more intimate spaces – private
spaces for communication – we are losing public spaces – Slavoj
Zizek
meùm: we have audience-intimacy on-going here
helen: conversation
suzon: chatting=flirting
hadzi.... it depends
alberto: FOR MANY PEOPLE CYBERSPACE DO NOT CREATE INTIMACY, TO ME
IS NOT, I FEEL LOVE AND INTIMACY WITH MY CYBERFRIENDS
helen: intimacy as conversation
isabel: still missing the body intimacy literal as in some dance.
Not only sexual though :D
vickismith: that is a form of intimacy shared steps

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Space and Time

Discussion, Block 3

Excerpt from the discussion at the end of Block 3, with Roger Mills (RM), Suzon Fuks (SF), Luka Prinčič (LP) and James Cunningham (JC); facilitated by Annie Abrahams (AA).

AA: The public was asking if this kind of performance is past or future. I don't know what to do with this, because, for me, as long as people are interested in it, it's present, so that's said enough for me, but maybe someone has something to say about it. Is it past or is it future?

RM: Whew, it's a very ambiguous question, isn't it? I think it's kind of both simultaneously, I mean the way that Ethernet Orchestra looks at what we will do in the future, we look at ways of incorporating new cultural influences into our individual practices and that's a very much a future aspect to what we do but also in the past. It's simultaneously, it's the moment, it's what's already happened, it's what's already become embodied in our practice. So I think it's both of it.

AA: Maybe we should ask if some in the chat could explain a little bit more, why should it be in the past, I don't understand it.

SF: Maybe it's about augmented reality and everything which has been shown here in the CyPosium is only on a computer?

AA: Hmm, but even that, I think that today you can just write something and it can be very actual and it can be very important for the future, so for me it's a non question. Maja and Luka, do you want to say something about future and past?

LP: It's a difficult question, but what I already mentioned a little bit before, is

that there is so much in the past that our project is based on. We had a presentation at a couple of conferences and there were questions in like: "You just took different parts that were already done and put them together?" and yes, this is what we do; but on the other hand there is some work we do on the level of, I would say, performance, not on the level of technology, and some combination of this, and a sense of how everything is put together that is special about it. But it would be really hard to say that this is the future, although our drama jockey would disagree I think.

JC: I had something a bit tangential to say, inspired by the idea of past and future, and it came from Roger's talk. When Roger talked about latency and lag, he said the lag was eleven milliseconds, which equated to a small room, so with the internet becoming faster and faster in the years of optic fibre, that latency gets smaller and smaller, so it's almost as if, sound-wise and vision-wise, we are coming closer and closer to the people in dispersed spaces, which is quite the opposite of the natural world in which you can see something in the distance but hear the sound a little bit delayed. So we are living with delay in sound all the time, it's not something new to ourselves that we experience as a new thing. It's funny that you can reduce that latency so small that it becomes even smaller than a small room, so it's like somebody is talking right next to you (speaking close to mic, voice distorted) so close in latency that it is really in the future.

(laughter)

RM: I think this is an interesting thing. I've been also wondering about how we perceive space and time, networked space and time. It came from exploring what some of the musicians and I were thinking: what is our collective sense of what the 'internet space' is? And then, what is the time as well? And within, certainly for musicians, it is a networked space so therefore is this time linked with this networked space as a sort of, 'spaces being other'? But what I was thinking, and the musicians said something similar as well, that their musical space is the music. It's not some sort of cyberspace or networked space other to where they are, but actually it's the music that they are in and that provides the space, they don't see any other networked space or cyberspace. And that is indicative for me to where the future is, in a sense, or where time is, if we are talking about future being time. The time is actually in the performance itself, it's intrinsically linked to the performance and we are occupied by the time of that performance, as we are the space of that performance rather than all these kind of metaphors. I don't know what any of the other presenters today think about this topic, because it is one that I find really interesting.

A New Type of Audience

Discussion, Block 3

Excerpt from the discussion at the end of Block 3, with Roger Mills (RM), James Cunningham (JC), Suzon Fuks (SF) and Luka Prinčič (LP); facilitated by Annie Abrahams (AA).

AA: During the preparation, and with Roger and with Suzon, something came up that spoke to me: what we are doing is, we are learning together. It's not so really important if we have a public or not, we are our own public in a certain way. In this kind of internet performance, the notion of public disappears more or less. Do you agree?

RM: I think audience is probably different to all of us. Maja and Luka rely on their audience to make their work; I stated right from the start that I don't. I think I am the audience in a group when I'm playing, I don't think we necessarily need an audience. Sometimes I find the audience detracts from the quality of the improvisations, or the communications and the improvisations, to some extent, and that's been reflected in what some of the other musicians have said when we have done gallery-type performances.

JC: I agree with Roger's comment about that for a lot of avant-garde or alternative performance practices a lot of times the audience is not very big, sometimes the collaborative team is bigger than the audience, and it still continues. That's been the case for a lot of online work that I've been involved in as well. So over the process my opinion about that has changed quite a lot, because I used to think that the performance could not exist without an audience and the audience made the performance, but now I've changed my mind totally and I agree with you, that line that you said Roger, when you said that a performance does not require an audience; because I'm now doing work in the bush where I feel it's a performance because of the way that I'm doing it, and there is nobody to see it (there are sometimes passers by ...).

SF: I see it in another way maybe than James. In terms of the online, there is a big question in regard of the audience, and for me the question is linked to the content in the performance: did we go beyond a form to really address content and go any deeper in content, and integrating the audience as well? The question is style, and it's true that sometimes there is an intensity and more liveness between a crew than between the crew and the audience, the crew and the audience on site or

the crew and the audience online, or also between the online and on site audience. That's really something that interests me - I don't think there is more intensity in one situation or another, it's something that we still explore, even in theatre. I mean it's so much a different kind of theatre, I think it's still to explore.

AA: I think, and that's why I want to go back to Maja and Luka, I think in a certain way you can see in their work, when doing performances where a public is needed, you can include the public as performer. For me it's becoming more and more like that, and if you have a public that is coming back and that's participating more times, they are becoming more and more – your partner.

LP: Yes. One of the things that we were really interested in as well was this, a new type of audience. Which is not only about interaction, it's about engagement and about how to - it's this amazing possibility where the audience has a totally free choice whether they will enter into interaction with performance. But maybe, for me there is a sense of responsibility as an artist that I must have an audience. I know and I appreciate a lot of experiments on the level of performance art and conceptual art where audience is maybe not needed or perceived as not needed, but I feel that if I do something as an artist, there is a responsibility that I take care that I do have an audience.

AA: In this context I would like to ask Roger if there is a difference between performing live and performing online, in the way you feel it, the way you make online improvisation or real life improvisation? Can you try to describe what is the difference?

RM: Oh definitely. When you have a gallery or theatre-based audience that's sat in front of you watching you improvising, they're following the conversation in the space with you, and they're watching you – I'm a trumpet player so my lips often bulge out here, I go bright red sometimes, you know, instrumentalists will physically and gesturally move with the way that they perform. This is one of the interesting things that has come up through case studies and actually watching the videos of musicians playing and the way that they use gesture that the other musicians just aren't seeing at the time. I think when the audience is part of that gestural interaction with the music, there's an energy that's passed between the audience and the musician that simply isn't there or it's in a different way when it's online. And when that energy is passed from the audience to the musician in the real space, that is a driver of the energy within that music. And so I think online musicians – and this goes back to intimacy – I think because there's this dispersed dislocation within networked performance and particularly talking about music here, that you have to think and feel and listen so much more carefully, and that induces a heightened sense of intimacy and awareness between you. So I think you have to work harder to get many of those things that you might get from a co-located audience.

AA: I also have the feeling that it's like that – it's not harder but it's taking more energy in a certain way, online performance, online being together, I always felt like that.

LP: This reminds me of something that happened in the first process that we

did for the big *Transmittance* in Pula, where we worked with performers. One of the performers had a plan to do performance in the space but also to act in another kind of role in the chat. So he would play both roles: sometimes when he wouldn't perform in the physical space, he would go onto his computer and do the chat role, another invented character. After we tried it a couple of times, he realised he's unable to do it. He's unable to switch. I think identifying where and how the energy is best, where to put the energy, and how to delegate or separate different tasks for more people, is necessary. So I think that the difficulty that you're describing, Annie, in the sense of taking energy, is also a matter of, that as media artists, we work a lot of times either alone or in pairs, or something like this, and we do a lot of different things at the same time in the performance. So when we are able to have more collaborators doing different tasks in the performance, it suddenly becomes much more easier I would say, those energies start flowing in very different ways. And, I would say that I don't have this feeling for example, because we have a moderator assigned and that we separated different roles.

Beyond the CyPosium

Alan in the Tap on Facebook, *Ruth Catlow, 2012, chalk pastel.* © *Ruth Catlow.*

Part of the Audience

Rob Myers

We all perform on the internet. The social media profiles that we are contractually obliged to give our real names to are just as much performances as our *World Of Warcraft* or *Minecraft* avatars. Yet these impromptu performances of our socialised and fantasy selves lack the literary quality of drama. Not drama in the sense of a Usenet or Tumblr flamewar, but in the sense of theatre.

The 1993 New Yorker cartoon captioned "On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog"[1] identifies two important features of the early public internet. Firstly it's a place, somewhere you can get onto. Secondly that place has limited bandwidth for establishing identity and communicating affect. This meant that the cyberspace of the net became a site for identity play and imagined realities.

As the text-based virtual reality of MOOs gave way to the image-based Palace Chat and the three dimensional AlphaWorld, the available bandwidth increased and with it the available ambiguity decreased. Describing a character or a scene or an action with a few words leaves the members of the audience much freer to exercise their own imaginations than seeing it in full motion animation with a high polygon count.

The visual, social and even economic order of virtual worlds and social media have become a more fixed and uncritical embodiment of mass media and the established social order. This has reduced their potential for alterity but it has made them useful representations both of shared reality and shared fantasy that can be used as a stage on which to perform critically, reintroducing the literary against the grain of their unreflective consumption of identity and spectacle.

Throughout this history, from the early 1990s to today, the internet's affordances have been used to produce dramatic performance in cyberspace, 'cyberformance'. The problem is we don't remember this, at least not as clearly as we should. Individually, institutionally, and technologically we have lost our memories of artistically groundbreaking and important performances.

This problem is not unique to cyberformance. All digital art suffers from the decay of digital media and the creeping obsolescence of the hardware that it runs on. Internet art suffers from bitrot, software obsolescence, linkrot, the loss of web pages and sites elsewhere on the net that are connected to the work, and netrot, changes in the protocols used to distribute it.

Above and beyond those problems, cyberformance involves live performance.

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1 See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/On_the_Internet%2C_nobody_knows_you're_a_dog (accessed 11 July 2014).

Unique events produced by historical communities at a particular moment using media that will rapidly become obsolete need to be recorded in order to be remembered or at least to be critically re-evaluated later. This creates a second layer of conservation and archiving problems.

Take the example (outside of the CyPosium) of Judy Malloy's *Brown House Kitchen*, a narrative environment created in the LambdaMOO text-based virtual reality.[2] Despite being mentioned in surveys of virtual art in the 1990s, despite being produced with institutional support, and despite being stored on one of the longest-running textual virtual world servers, the software objects that made up the work were recycled as part of the normal running of LambdaMOO and are now lost. Many other text-based virtual realities, some specifically designed for dramatic works, are not even online any more. And the protocols used to access them are old, with software to connect to them increasingly not installed by default on newer operating systems. Even those created after the Internet Archive started will not appear in it, as they are not web-based.

I mention LambdaMOO as by chance I was researching text based virtual worlds and performance in the months before the CyPosium was announced. One work that was described in the literature but untraceable online was Stephen A. Schrum's *NetSeduction*, which Schrum presented and discussed at the CyPosium. And the script of the original performance was made available through the CyPosium website. Without the CyPosium, these resources would not have been made available.

These contrasting examples drive home just how badly needed the CyPosium was. The internet does enable us to digitise and experience more culture than ever before, but it also erases our memories of the culture that is native to it. And the often highly experimental nature of cyberformance makes it harder to record and remember than almost any other kind of technologically enabled art.

As well as addressing a specific need to recover the history of net performance, the CyPosium is an exemplary model for a new kind of online event in the era of Massively Online Open College courses. It performs the function of a symposium or convention online, reducing barriers to access and increasing reach for institutions, speakers and audience members. The Waterwheel Tap software used for most of the CyPosium allows side-channels of audience communication, which help to build a sense of place and community and allow the audience to ask (and answer) questions and share knowledge among themselves and with the speakers.

The panel discussions that Waterwheel enabled meant that old and new net performers could discuss each others work in the light of new developments or freshly reconsidered history. And we, the audience, whoever we were and wherever we were, could watch and learn from this discussion and join in. I am often wary of the word 'open', but there was an intellectual and social generosity and inclusiveness to the CyPosium that made it feel like a very open event.

A ripple of excitement went through the mailing lists I subscribe to when the CyPosium was announced. Its organizers and line up promised something special, and the event itself didn't disappoint. To be part of the audience, chatting in text alongside the live streaming video presentations, was to be part of both a welcoming ad hoc conversational community of interest and participating in a key moment in a

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2 See: www.well.com/user/jmalloy/narrative_moo.html (accessed 11 July 2014).

larger historical conversation.

The CyPosium went beyond recovering and presenting the history of online performance. It brought together net performers old and new in productive dialogue in front of an engaged audience and served as an example of a new kind of net native event. Now that the event itself has finished the CyPosium web site serves as an important record of an important aspect of online creativity.

After the CyPosium …

Dr. Alberto Vazquez

13 October 2012, Buenos Aires, Argentina. This is the email I wrote the following day: "Thanks for the CyPosium. In my life as a psychiatrist I have been to countless symposiums, here and around the world, but yesterday my head exploded: exchange, practice, learning, theory, more than eight hours of enjoyment. For me, it was a moving experience, great learning, both from the presenters, but also by its configuration with questions and comments from the audience. I think it was an historical day for the web 2.0. It was like being in a global symposium, but comfortable, installed in my home. The weather seemed very pleasant, facilitators were very good, and a sense of humor in the chat gave an affective note to each meeting."

We are attending an international symposium – therefore there will be a table of panelists, moderators and attendees who come from different countries. English is the official language, the symposium will last most of the day, with two-hour blocks, three presentations in each block, and breaks to go to the bathroom, have a drink, eat lunch, etc, as usual. But this time, there's no fancy hotel with an auditorium, no convention center, no travel anywhere, no money spent in transport, no even looking at which clothes to wear for such a prestigious event.

The CyPosium is organized by "a loose collective of artists and researchers working in the field of cyberformance - live performance that uses the internet as a performance site, connecting remote players and audience via telecommunications technology in lively real-time events".

It is mostly hosted on Waterwheel's Tap, which is instrumental for its success, allowing fluid visual presentations and panel discussions with all presenters in webcams together, at the same time.

I am in the audience amongst more than 60 people: we see the panelists, but they don't see us, they read our words written in the chat and we watch and listen to them. Some are networked performance pioneers, its platforms' founders, or researchers of its history and development through the years.

We watch, listen to love stories, are moved and surprised. We learn, question, and question between ourselves.

We are not alone, everyone in their country or region; we meet others like us, exchanging questions and answers: How real is real? How virtual is virtual? How impracticable are the borders? Or perhaps they do not exist? Are we network artists or a network of artists? Or both?

What is certain is that we need the others to create, to share – and with new technologies – co-creation appears, which is more than the sum of its parts, a

performance in real time and online, with other remote people, using words, avatars, chat, transmission of images of actual performances and tangible spaces, leading us to a world of ephemeral performances, lasting the duration of the meeting, which we will not repeat and, later, can only have recorded.

Imagine these emotions coming and going and you are alone with your computer, but virtually, you share them with all the other people online. And something extraordinary happens during the breaks: many people would not leave, engrossed by their exchange, social, cultural, personal, similar to when you go out to the lobby and share a coffee with colleagues.

I have no doubt that egos are shattered and fall immediately. This is not for egocentric artists who say 'my work'; there is no final applause, only 'clap, clap' written in the chat. We learn to tolerate and even enjoy that it does not happen in this CyPosium, as it would happen after each conference where you could see the applause or standing ovations. But emotions are deep.

Of course, you can see the CyPosium recordings, but if you were not present, you missed the experience of being part of it, of being a witness and an active member of an historical event that will mark the history of cyber-performances.

I don't want to summarize wonderful papers, on the other hand I would like to convey what happened to me, in my heart and head, which is exactly what I get when working with others on the network, and that I encourage in my own work, because I learn from others, and to learn has been a fundamental goal of my long life.

I had the honor of translating some of the CyPosium papers into Spanish.[1] I assure you that reading gave me another turn and dimension of what I heard in the virtual room.

First published on the Waterwheel blog, November 1, 2012: http://blog.water-wheel. net/2012/11/after-cyposium-by-dr-alberto-vazquez.html

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1 These papers can be found on the CyPosium website http://www.cyposium.net (accessed August 13, 2013).

The CyPosium
– a Contribution to Expanding the
Definition of Cyberformance

Clara Gomes

The presentations and discussions of The CyPosium are an important contribution to the development of the concept of cyberformance, live performance using the internet and online platforms. Through the explanation, by their authors, of the characteristics, objectives and questions posed by older and more recent performances, we could identify the seminal definition of the concept of cyberformance by Helen Varley Jamieson and understand how it has developed to be a more encompassing form of art.

The CyPosium, hosted by UpStage and Waterwheel Tap on October 12, 2012, gathered several performers, researchers and academics, to discuss past cyberformances, with different aims and characteristics, using various platforms and techniques, engaging the audience at different levels. Most presentations showed that cyberformance has diversified and expanded, raising new questions. Is it still cyberformance?

I analysed some of those communications and the performances they referred to, to understand the ways in which they broaden the concept defined by Helen Varley Jamieson in her Master of Arts thesis *Adventures in Cyberformance*.[1]

From chat rooms to other platforms – scepticism and evidence

Throughout the presentations of The CyPosium we had moments of recollection of historical cyberformances, performance groups and initial platforms, as well as classical issues and questions of cyberformance – the bridging of distance, presence, the willing suspension of disbelief or the involvement of the audience. These references to classical cyberformance also came up in relation to newer graphic platforms and virtual worlds, illustrating the inevitable development of cyberformance into other forms inhabiting more recent spaces.

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1 Helen Varley Jamieson, *Adventures in Cyberformance: experiments at the interface of theatre and the internet*, MA Thesis, (Queensland University of Technology, 2008).

It was in the beginning of the 1990s that the first experiments in cyberformance originated, in chat rooms and MUDs (Multi User Dungeons),[2] at first only with text, later integrating graphics. *Hamnet*, by the Hamnet Players,[3] an 80-line version of *Hamlet*, is considered to be the first documented online performance that took place in a participated forum. This group was followed by others, including Desktop Theater[4] and the Plaintext Players,[5] both specialized in directed textual improvisation.

Adriene Jenik was an original member of Desktop Theater (1997-2002) and in her presentation *So far, and yet, so close: Lessons from Telematic Improvisation*, she referred to those times in which performance online wasn't much more than a 'chat' or a "live global visual chat intervention" in the platform The Palace.[6] However some of its characteristics were already those that mark cyberformance – it was live, participated by an audience and, in great measure, improvised.

Stephen A. Schrum, theoretician in the field of digital performance, also referred to those earlier experiences with a recollection of ATHEMOO and *NetSeduction: Censorship and The Art of Sexting Before Cell Phones*, recalling the times of chat performance and drawing a mental picture of what it would be like to have that performance from 1996 done today in Second Life (SL),[7] asking the audience to point out what was gained and lost with the evolution of cyberformance to graphical worlds and what is more powerful: the text or the graphical representation. "Which has primacy: the brain and imagination, and willing suspension of disbelief? Or a parade of blatant images?" he asked.

In the ensuing discussion, the audience got divided with regard to the text, as Schrum's own question did. Some invoked the "literary quality of MOOs" but others pointed out that "images are types of symbols just like text". Those in the middle of the spectrum of opinion insisted on the importance of both, suggesting that cyberformance does not have to stop at text and that we can "get the same semantic richness out of text and images." "Text does play a very big role in human imagination and creativity, but virtual worlds, such as Second Life, give a chance for people to exercise this creativity using their imagination; one doesn't necessarily tower over the other", someone wrote. We should note that even in Multi User Virtual Environments (MUVE)[8] or online games, voice is seldom used and text is an important means of communication during performances (of the group Second Front,[9] for example) both for performers and audience. Text versus image, the resistance to voice (more exposure, less intimacy) and the benefits/disadvantages

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2 Chat rooms are Internet Relay Chat (IRC) such as LambdaMOO and ATHEMOO. Multi User Dungeon or Domain (MUD), Massively Multiplayer Online Game (MMOG) or Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game (MMORPG) are multi-player online text chat and role-playing environments.

3 S. Harris, G. Kidder & the Hamnet Players, *The Hamnet Players : an archive, 1993* http://micro5.mscc.huji.ac.il/~msdanet/cyberpl@y/hamnet- index.html (accessed July 24, 2008).

4 Desktop Theatre official web site: www.desktoptheater.org (accessed August 13, 2013).

5 Plaintext Players official web site: http://yin.arts.uci.edu/~players/ (accessed August 13, 2013).

6 The Palace offical web site: www.thepalace.com/ (accessed August 13, 2013).

7 Second Life official web site: http://secondlife.com/ (accessed August 13, 2013).

8 For instance, *Senses Places* (2011-) by Isabel Valverde and Todd Cochrane.

9 Second Front official web site: www.secondfront.org/ (accessed August 13, 2013).

of 3D avatars and virtual worlds for performance, were the subjects of healthy and participated discussions.

The presentations of these two performers and researchers and the following discussions demonstrate how cyberformance has developed through an evolution of techniques, platforms and objectives. Cyberformance practitioners are not static, they open up to new means, crossing the technology with their aims and their message.

However, cyberformance using text, music and 2D graphics – in platforms such as UpStage or the Waterwheel Tap (that worked so well for this CyPosium) are still alive and kicking. That was evident in Miljana Perić's presentation *More/Less Than a Cyberfession: A few theoretical short-(cir)cu(i)ts from Learn to hear through the lies of your eyes*, which was a cyberformance in itself; and in the presentation *Re-calling Home* about the creative process developed for the performance *Calling Home* by ActiveLayers, that was presented in UpStage in 2008 and re-enacted in the same platform in 2012.

The migration of some cyberformance to MUVE takes the questions of virtuality, identity and the double to another level with the assertion of the 3D avatar. *We have always been avatars, and avatars must die*, the talk by Alan Sondheim, dealt with questions that have only begun to be raised with the advent of three dimensional avatars, although "the virtual has always been with us" as the author, researcher and performer said. Pain, death and the "lure" of the potential for eternity of virtual worlds are the topics of his most recent performances, a critique of the escapism of virtual worlds and an attempt at bringing real "suffering" into these virtual ambiences. His experiments with avatar interiors and distorted avatar movement in Second Life go in the same directions as other contemporary experiments with movement and choreography in MUVE.

In *Head shot! – Performative Interventions in Mixed Realities*, Joseph DeLappe discussed his project *The Salt Satyagraha - Gandhi's March to Dandi in Second Life* (2008). Inspired by the political debate caused by his previous performances, the artist researched the origins of political protest and decided to re-enact Gandhi's historical Salt March. For 26 days his Gandhi avatar walked in SL, activated by DeLappe's steps on a treadmill in real life, for six to eight hours a day. His avatar gave a walking stick to other avatars so they would walk with him. As DeLappe pointed out, this performance developed a deep connection between himself and his avatar that he did not anticipate.

During the discussions that took place after these two presentations – DeLappe's and Sondheim's – Second Life was put at stake as a legitimate platform for performance, criticised by some for being "too commercial" and by others for demanding more exposure and allowing less intimacy – in the use of voice, for instance. Change always brings doubt and these remarks about SL as an environment for cyberformance would be expected – although performance in MUVE has been happening for several years. However, others defended 3D virtual worlds as practical and interesting spaces for a more embodied performance. In the end, the possibility of a coexistence of different media, techniques and platforms – even used in the same performance or used by the same group – was clearly demonstrated in the presentations at this symposium.

Gaming – how cyberformance appropriates other interfaces

Auriea Harvey and Michael Samyn began *Wirefire*, a live love performance, in 1999. It was a chat room with rich visuals: animated graphics, interactive objects and webcam projections (without voice); a poetic fantasy that opened up for other people. Every Thursday night at midnight in Belgium, Michael and Auriea – who was in the U.S.A. – would be on a cybernautical date. The audience could click the Flash animations to get graphics and sound and later they could also write back and words would translate into sounds and images.

It was "very old school", Auriea Harvey noted in their presentation *Wirefire – A Complete History of Love in the Wires* (parts 17-24) and, in 2003, after the end of Web 1.0, they felt like dinosaurs and went looking for other forms that allowed for more participation. They found them in games.

So, Auriea Harvey and Michael Samyn changed from an initial form of cyberformance to a different kind of interface which has been increasingly used by performers in recent years. However, concerned with the escapist tendency of games, the bodily side affects and the futility of the game industry, they refuse to create addictive virtual worlds where people forget themselves and, instead, imagine games that come in the sequence of their *Wirefire* love affair: games of love, not war.

> When a medium can represent a soldier and it can recreate a theater of war, it needs to have something to say about this subject matter. The response of the games industry to this dilemma so far has been retreat. We minimize the importance of the story and draw attention to our cool mechanics and the fun our players are having. At the expense, of course, of cultural significance and expanding the audience. Instead of embracing the artistic potential of the medium, we have retreated into the comfortable zone of gaming.[10]

This critique from Michael Samyn to the games industry is reflected in the poetic games he and Auriea Harvey build in their independent development studio, Tale of Tales.[11] Joseph DeLappe addressed similar concerns with a series of performances in online first-person shooter games, including the well-known *dead-in-iraq* (2006-2011). In 2001, pointing to the contradiction between top-of-the-line 3D game spaces "where people go around killing each other" and the form of communication used in them – the keyboard, "a nineteenth century invention" – he did his first performance online: writing the poem *Howl*, by the beat generation poet, Allen Ginsberg, in the text chat of a game, which took him six hours. He went on 'taking agency' in a similar fashion: he recreated an episode of the popular TV series *Friends* in the also very popular game *Quake*, and it went viral; he re-enacted three presidential debates in games spaces; and, when he decided to participate in a contest for the creation of a memorial to the American casualties in Iraq, he ended up developing *dead-in-iraq*.

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10 Michael Samyn, "Almost Art," *The Escapist* Issue 291, February, 2011, www.escapistmagazine.com/articles/view/issues/issue_291/8608-Almost-Art (accessed May 14, 2013).

11 *Tale of Tales* official website: http://tale-of-tales.com/tales/index.html (accessed May 14, 2013).

By this time, *America's Army* was a popular first-person shooter game, used by the U.S. military to recruit young people. DeLappe went into the game, named his avatar "dead-in-iraq" and listed all the names of the dead American soldiers of that invasion/war in the text chat. After he had been interviewed by the media and the performance gained visibility, he came under attack, accused of not being a patriot, and was asked why he did not protest on the steps of the federal building instead. DeLappe explained that his performance was a quite similar form of protest, since that game was like the federal building, a public building, and what he was doing was "online public street theatre". The other players asked what was is point, asked him to stop and, several times, voted him out of the game. The performance ended December, 18, 2011 which was the official withdrawal date of the last U.S. troops in Iraq, when he had introduced 4484 names.

These two presentations showed a path taken by cyberformance, one that has been developing in the latest years – the use of game spaces (*World of Warcraft* is another example) and of games technology (the remote control from Nintendo's Wii or the capacity for capturing movement of Microsoft's Xbox360 Kinect) and even wearables to open up the field cyberformers work in. Nevertheless, both the ways threaded by these performers reinforced the idea that technology is not the most important – its connection with people's desires and aims is.

Also, with these recent developments in gaming and appropriation by performance a question pops to mind – are games the future of art in the internet? During her presentation Auriea Harvey answered it indirectly: "The internet is not the future – we are".

The question of naming and re-defining

Digital performance;[12] digital practices;[13] digital theatre, virtual theatre;[14] cyberdrama;[15] cyber-theatre, post-organic performance;[16] networked performance;[17] code performance;[18] and many other terms, such as cyber-performance and hyperperformance, have been used in the latest times to refer to the kind of practices that were the object of the CyPosium.[19]

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12 Steve Dixon, *Digital performance: a history of new media in theatre, dance, performance art, and installation* (MIT Press, Cambridge, 2007).
13 Susan Broadhurst, *Liminal acts : a critical overview of contemporary performance and theory* (London; New York: Cassell, 1999).
14 Gabriella Giannachi, *Virtual theatres* (London; New York: Routledge, 2004).
15 Janet Murray, *Hamlet on the Holodeck* (New York: Free Press, 1997).
16 Matthew Causey, *Theatre and performance in digital culture : from simulation to embeddedness* (London: Routledge, 2006).
17 Joanne Green, Helen Thorington & Michelle Reil, Networked performance blog. www.turbulence.org/blog/ (accessed May 14, 2013).
18 Gazira Babeli, "mother" of performance in Second Life, calls her actions code performance "partly because some actions or events were programmed using a code of instructions, partly because they explored some 'imported' codes of human behaviour". www.gazirababeli.com/GAZ.php (accessed May 14, 2013).
19 See Maria Chatzichristodoulou's article in this book, pp 19-29.

The presenters themselves used different designations. Telematic performance was widely chosen. It was used in Adriene Jenik's *So far and yet so close: Lessons from Telematic Improvisation* where she drew a line from her initial textual performances with Desktop Theatre to more recent video performances; in Maja Delak and Luka Prinčić's *Transmittance – a Telematic performance* and in Roger Mills' *Ethernet Orchestra – Case Studies of Networked Intercultural Improvisation* abstract where he refers to "synchronous telematic performance".[20] Delak and Prinčić also defined their practice as cyber-performance, and mixed reality performance was chosen by the performers that use game spaces, like DeLappe.

Some of the definitions of these terms are very specific, others very wide. For instance, digital performance is any performance that uses digital means, but it does not necessarily need to be networked or use the internet, it can just be a stage performance; mixed reality performance is widely used by groups using game technology such as Blast Theory or performers mixing stage performance with online performance – however, any UpStage performance or SL code performance is always mixed reality performance since it crosses the actual or physical world, where the performer is, and the virtual world where their projection or their avatar is.

I could go on defining each of the terms cited above and many others but the question is: are we all talking about the same thing? I believe so. As Maria Chatzichristodoulou pointed out in The CyPosium opening presentation: "What ever you call it, it is an established genre".

What is important to notice is that all the terms are legitimate when correctly applied to the practice at stake. However in my own need to name and unify, I think that, from all the attempts on the creation of terminology for this kind of art, cyberformance is the most encompassing one and the most suitable for the different types of performance that were the focus of the CyPosium.

Helen Varley Jamieson coined the term in 2000 in an effort to name the practice of live performance in the internet while she was working with Desktop Theatre, developed it with her subsequent work in the performing group, Avatar Body *Collison*, and later defined it academically in her Master of Arts thesis *Adventures in Cyberformance*. In this study the author analyzed what she considered a new theatrical form: "live performance that utilizes internet technologies to bring remote performers together in real time, for remote and/or proximal audiences."[21]

Can Jamieson's definition survive the introduction of new forms, new technologies and new platforms, like Second Life and game spaces, with all the new questions that this shift raises as we saw throughout this article? Is it still cyberformance? I believe it is, we just need to pick up the initial definition and bring it up to date. And we do so by going back to Jamieson's Cyberformance Manifesto[22] and reading it in the light of the recent experiences in "live performance by remote players using internet technologies" that the CyPosium presentations and discussions reflect.[23]

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20 Telematic performance is live performance which uses telecommunications and information technology to connect distributed performers/audience. It is used usually in the sense of video connection. It generates telepresence.

21 Helen Varley Jamieson, *Adventures in Cyberformance*, 34.

22 Ibid, 34-40.

23 A collective rewriting of the Cyberformance Manifesto took place on PiratePad on March 26, 2013: http://piratepad.net/kyryJZxb6y (accessed August 5, 2013).

A key characteristic of cyberformance is that it happens live in an interaction between performers and the public and so any documents produced as a result (photos, video) should not be taken as the work in itself (although they can be useful for a subsequent analyses as happened in the CyPosium). The performances that were the object of this symposium all testify to this trait of cyberformance – they all employed live interaction be it on a virtual stage (a chat, a specific platform), or on a combination of virtual/physical stages (e.g. Delak and Prinčić's *Transmittance*).

This kind of work is developed in cyberspace using chat rooms like Steven Schrum's *Netseduction*; computer games, as the experiments of Joseph DeLappe with Quake and America's Army; 2D graphic chats, such as The Palace, used by Adriene Jenik and Desktop Theater; MUVE such as Second Life,[24] a virtual world that as been the stage for several of Steven Schrum's recent performances, Alan Sondheim's experiments with avatars and death or DeLappe's Gandhi march; and finally, platforms created to exhibit cyberformance such as UpStage, which was used by Miljana Peric for *Lean to hear from the lies of your eyes*, or, more recently, Whaterwheel Tap, where this symposium took place. The work can also be developed concurrently on one or more physical stages.

A third characteristic of cyberformance noted by Jamieson in her study is that performers and audience are distributed physically and the experience of performance is shared and activated in real time. In most of the performances analysed in this meeting it was obvious that performers and audience were in different geographical spaces, but in several cases the performers themselves created the work with a collaboration from afar as in Harvey and Samyn's *Wirefire* or in Active Layers' *Calling Home*.

Since it is dependent on the connection to the internet, cyberformance is also telematic in its engineering approach, which means there is a convergence of telecommunication networks with computers[25] but it is not traditional videoconferencing or a distribution of videos or recordings. This also means cyberformance is not telematic performance in the usual sense of video connection[26] (which does not have to be through cyberspace) between performers or performers and audience but it can use this possibility as we saw, for instances, in the work of

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24 In Second Life there are entities such as the Odyssey Contemporary Art and Performance Simulator (http://odysseysimulator.com/, accessed August 13, 2013) or the Linden Endowment for the Arts (http://lea-sl.org/, accessed August 13, 2013) that organize performance festivals.

25 For further information on 'convergence', see Roy Ascott, "Distance makes the art grow further: distributed authorship and telematic textuality" in *At A Distance*, ed. A. C. a. N. Neumark, 282 (MIT Press, 2005).

26 "Telematic environments allow for distributed participants to come together in the same virtual space through live video connections" (Maria Chatzichristodoulou in the opening presentation of the CyPosium, pages 19-29 in this book). Telematic performance is understood in a general sense to be live performance using videoconferencing technology and telecommunications to connect remote performers and ambiences (not necessarily through the internet – e.g. live satellite telecasts in the 70's and 80's) and was very popular in end of the 90's (see Dixon, 2007: 419-435). However, in a broader sense it means any live performance connecting distributed performers through telecommunications, usually through the internet … but so does online performance. So, in the sense that became more popular – as in the one used above by Maria Chatzichristodoulou, telematic performance is the one that conjoins remote locations through video connection over the internet.

Harvey and Samyn, where webcams transmitted their image to the site of *Wirefire*.

In her Manifesto Jamieson points out that in the construction of cyberformance performers generate telepresence as in the concept used by Eduardo Kác.[27] Much has been written since then on the subject of presence and so I would like to add virtual presence[28] to the equation. Presence can be more or less immersive – some make it depend on the degree of simulation, others on the degree of embodiment – for instance DeLappe's walking on the treadmill to animate his Gandhi avatar would make his performance more immersive. However this assertion is still at stake, since nowadays possibilities for bodily interaction online are still minimal.

As Jamieson points out in her study, cyberformance does not pretend to be a simulation of reality. It invites a "willing suspension of disbelief" affirming the illusory nature of its craft. As in many hybrids, technological means and other production artefacts are always present on stage and the computer is the visible hypersurface through which participants interact. Cyberformance is the opposite of the myth of total immersion in a simulation through the Cartesian idea of separation between body and mind, allowing a disembodiment.[29]

Rereading Jamieson's original definition we can also conclude that cyberformance is intermedial,[30] hybrid,[31] experimental in form and content, metamedial, reflecting the challenges of the media it employs, liminal,[32] with an avant garde posture and an open work,[33] unfinished and only existing in interactivity.

As we have seen throughout this article, most of the performances analysed and discussed in the CyPosium fit these qualities. Some, at the time of their conception and presentation, were on the brink of the artistic and technological possibilities of

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27 Eduardo Kac, "Telepresence Art", http://ekac.org/telepresence.art._94.html (accessed May 14, 2013). Originally published in English and German in *Teleskulptur*, Richard Kriesche, Editor (Graz, Austria: Kulturdata, 1993), pp. 48-72. A shorter version appeared as "Telepresence: A New Communicative Experience", *Epipháneia*, N. 2, March 1997, Salerno, Italy, pp. 53-55.

28 "As David Z. Saltz points out, 'virtual reality systems fully immerse a subject in a computer-simulated environment, a purely virtual space with no physical real world spatial coordinates. Telepresence, by contrast, uses computers, telecommunications and robotics to conjoin two or more real-world locations.' Although, as Saltz points out, there is a substantial difference between virtual reality and telepresence, both create a virtual environment which, in the case of virtual reality, is totally simulated; and, in the case of telepresence, is the remediatised merging of two real locations. In neither case is the environment actually there." Gabriella Giannachi, *Virtual theatres* (London; New York: Routledge, 2004).

29 There are two schools of thought: the immersionist for which virtual reality and MUVE are simulations and which objective is to be transparent and so to allow total immersion – and the augmentationist one, which states virtual worlds are not simulations of reality but creations (there is an appropriation and representation of cyberspace in ways not identifiable with reality that add meaning to interactions online) and recognizes – and desires – the opacity of the media, making the technology and the hypersurface explicit. The concept of cyberformance adjusts to this one.

30 Freda Chapple & Chiel Kattenbelt, *Intermediality in theatre and performance* (2nd ed.) (Amsterdam: Rodopi 2006).

31 Nick Kaye, *Art into Theatre: Performance Interviews and Documents* (Australia, Harwood Academic Publishers, 1996).

32 Susan Broadhurst, *Liminal acts*.

33 Umberto Eco, Umberto, *The open work* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989).

the moment – in many we see an appropriation of entertainment and/or commercial platforms as spaces for performance (e.g. The Palace, digital games, Second Life), taking the communication capabilities of those to another level. Also, most of them reflect on the means they use and question contemporary issues in a very political way (e.g. Delak and Prinčić's reflection on the state of contemporary living; Sondheim's questioning of embodiment; Adriene Jenik's – with Desktop Theater – women in black after 9/11 and DeLappe's criticism of the invasion of Iraq.)

As is obvious, cyberformance is digital performance, and it implies an expert use of the computer because manipulation of ambiences and avatars demands accurate typing skills. Cyberformance is so digital that Jamieson points out that we could say "break a digit" instead of the traditional theatre wish "break a leg".[34]

However, the fact that cyberformance is dependent on digital technology does not imply it is reduced to the eye-hand binomial, since, with the addition of interfaces, other parts of the body or all the body may be used. This happens when we add motion capture to move avatars or influence the virtual set, using a webcam, the console of some games or wearable sensors. DeLappe's walk on the treadmill animating his Gandhi avatar in Second Life is an example of these possibilities for a more embodied cyberformance.

The presentations of the CyPosium reflected an updated cyberformance notion, as does UpStage: as a platform, it allows for a creative practice using live audiovisual mixing and, in its 2012 festival, it integrated connections to other platforms such as Waterwheel Tap, which includes live video-conferencing facilities, and Second Life, which permitted first person immersion through 3D avatars and experiments involving motion capture software, both for performers and audience.

As we have seen throughout this article, the CyPosium presentations and the performances they refer to reflect the development and challenges of cyberformance, the current variety of expressions within the genre as well as the opening to other platforms, such as Second Life and digital games.

Thus, we can conclude that cyberformance is not confined to a form, a platform or a type of technology and that it will go on evolving. The new possibilities of the virtual and the development of interfaces open new perspectives for a cyberformance even more creative, interactive and participated.

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34 Helen Varley Jamieson, *Adventures in Cyberformance*, 40.

Alan in the Tap*, Ruth Catlow, 2012, chalk pastel. © Ruth Catlow.*

Memory, Death and Cyberformance

Alan Sondheim & Helen Varley Jamieson

After, and inspired by, the CyPosium Alan Sondheim and Helen Varley Jamieson discussed memory, death and cyberformance via email. Here are some excerpts.

On Mon, 28 Jan 2013, helen varley jamieson wrote:
i want to pick up first on the act of remembering; in our original call for the CyPosium, we talked about the body of online performance that has been growing since the early '90s, & said "The net, however, is forgetful: it loses the memory of those events, and of the people who lived them, of the environments and communities who hosted them." The CyPosium was intended in part to be a collective act of remembering, & there is much that you have said about this, e.g.:

"My deep feeling is that all of this stuff is lost, permanently lost, after a decade or so; that's the nature of the Net in spite of all the conferences about archiving, outdated technology, accessibility, open source, open software, and so forth."

"within the imminence of memory, everything becomes reconstruction and dependent on the archive, and there are so many difficulties there. We want to remember - but we don't remember."

does it matter, if things are forgotten? i think it does, but at the same time i quite enjoy forgetting, as an exercise in releasing, letting go, moving on. my practice is in live performance which is fundamentally impermanent & ephemeral - documenting it is almost a contradiction. within the UpStage project we have strongly resisted making full show recordings public, instead editing together excerpts to give a sense without trying to recreate the whole - & the showreel is another, different work. when things are forgotten, what traces do they leave? are there traces in you, in your work, from some of the work that you've mentioned which is no longer accessible, only remembered by a few?

On 28/01/13 6:01 PM, Alan Sondheim wrote:
Hi, odd you begin with memory; last night we played at the Downtown Music Gallery,
Jackson Moore, Alto
Chris Diasparra, Tenor
Azure Carter, voice
Alan Sondheim, chromatic harmonica, cura cumbus,
 sarangi, oud, long-necked saz
http://lounge.espdisk.com/archives/1032
– and the recording isn't particularly good. When you record live performance, you lose room resonance and echo, everything is compressed into a single complex wave so here, for example, the saxophones dominate everything. But every musician I know does this, trying to preserve what she or he can. It gets absurd; I have around 46 gigabytes of music alone. We did a four-day improvisation at Eyebeam which Jackson Moore recorded - and the external hard-drive has acted up; he's already put $2100 into data recovery ... And it should be noticed that digital reproduction always deals with raster and compression, so whatever was original down to the molecular level is already filtered.

On Tue, 29 Jan 2013 12:27 PM, helen varley jamieson wrote:
it does get absurd; sometimes people spend more time & energy on the documentation of a live event, than on the event itself. & we all have dvds & other storage files piling up around us that we will never have time to look at or listen to ... it's always a lesser thing in the end.

On 28/01/13 6:01 PM, Alan Sondheim wrote:
On the other hand, at least for music, audio documentation is critical since it's all in real-time (the same may be true in Second Life). The last performance I did w/ Sandy in SL involved annihilating the sky platform at the end; the audience fell about a kilometer. I needed to see that afterwards, to understand the dynamics etc. So there are times it's important. But with music I can use a Zoom recording device and forget about it and with SL (Second Life), Fraps – and forget about it. So there's little energy spent on the documentation per se.

I think all of this, including Cyposium, is built into us genetically; it is the calling-forth of culture to preserve, recount – everything. The Emily Dickinsons of the world are a rarity; most of us operate within accounting, accountancy – don't forget the earliest vestiges of writing itself, the bullae, were based on accountancy, keeping track of the world. This is primeval with our species; to possess culture is to keep track, no matter the impossibility.

On Tue, 29 Jan 2013 12:27 PM, helen varley jamieson wrote:
we invent ourselves/our culture through documentation?

On 29/01/13 7:18 PM, Alan Sondheim wrote:
That's a good way to put it; before writing, there were marks on sticks and I've written about the body as always already cultural and signed – by scars, tattoos, scratches, etc. We have evidence of culture all the way back. Even without concrete manifestations, there's human memory. And impossible it is; if you think of the Internet Archive project, what can it possibly do? It still has to take snapshots from particular periods and everything else, like lightning flashes, fall through the grate. There's nothing to be done about it.

What we're looking at, is our own deaths, in the face. For our memories, no matter who we are, are fundamentally worlds that we're incapable of transmitting, even Proust for example. When someone dies, a world dies with her or him, and the material culture which surrounded her (I'm thinking of my mother and her organizing) is immediately dispersed; it's as if connections are screaming to remain coherent, but like bones, they fall apart. We are all worlds like this - I have everything 'arranged' in our apartment, my favorite books and what they mean to me, the instruments and what I can do with them (and my repairs, keeping them going a little longer), and that will all go.

On Tue, 29 Jan 2013, helen varley jamieson wrote:
yes – i always find it terribly poignant to see old photos for sale in second hand shops – the shoebox or album of family photos from 100 years ago that has come from the cupboard of some old person now deceased, & whoever has the task of clearing out the house has discarded the photos, dispersed once-treasured memories into an anonymous hands.

On 29/01/13 7:18 PM, Alan Sondheim wrote:
This is really interesting – Azure and I have the same feeling. And at one point I acted on it – I found scattered photographs from a Jewish book-seller survivor of WWII, assembled them, found information about him from the NY Times, and gave all of this to an archive dedicated to preserving cultural information from the refugees. It would have been permanently lost without me.

On Tue, 29 Jan 2013, helen varley jamieson wrote:
if something of our artwork survives & continues to be appreciated after our deaths, does that make death easier to accept? or is it more about satisfying our own sense of self-importance? i wonder whether i have anything to say that will be still relevant in a hundred years ...

On 29/01/13 7:18 PM, Alan Sondheim wrote:
I don't think it makes death easier to accept, at least for me; Azure will tell you, I'm obsessed by death, by my own death – it haunts me and I wake weeping 'off the charts.' I do want a record so that at least for a year or two people could say, he did this/he did that, but I've always been under the radar anyway in terms of canonization or preservation – I'm still not in any 'big' new media shows etc. So I don't expect much.

On 28/01/13 6:01 PM, Alan Sondheim wrote:
And culture, as the human species blooms out of control, gets thicker, more entangled, more complex; the Wired- or Apple-technophiliasts ride only the crest of a wave that crashes like everything else.

This is gloomy but it's truth; species disappear at 3-4 an _hour,_ and with the loss of a species, there's the lost of yet another world, Umwelt, qualitatively different than any other, unique.

On Tue, 29 Jan 2013, helen varley jamieson wrote:
why is it gloomy? species were coming & going before humans came along, & will continue after. we've speeded things up, including our own destruction, but the cycles of evolution & extinction are inevitable.

On 29/01/13 7:18 PM, Alan Sondheim wrote:
It's no longer a cycle, it's exponential and on the order of the Permian extinctions. Way way different. No cycle but desertification. Most of the megafauna around the world is going or gone. Most of the primates – I think 247 species – are headed for extinction. A long story which I follow closely – Azure majored in environmental conservation and all that emerges is horror tales.

You talk about traces, and yes, there are traces within us, that last perhaps a generation. Again, I remember my mother intimately, but my daughter has almost no knowledge of her, and if she has children, they'll have no knowledge, perhaps a picture or a fact conveying nothing. The nearest to the opposite is probably Boswell's [biography of Samuel] Johnson. So we do carry these traces – we're made from them including the tens of thousands of bacteria species that make us appear whole and contained, which we are not, we're coagulations at best ...

On Tue, 29 Jan 2013, helen varley jamieson wrote:
yes – & yet the prevailing culture of individualism denies this, it positions the individual as a unique & special being, which encourages people to think they alone are thinking, discovering, inventing things for the first time when in fact their activities are built on this huge pile of coagulated compost of past traces. hence the importance of documentation.

On 29/01/13 7:18 PM, Alan Sondheim wrote:
Absolutely, but as you pointed out as well, the documentation, say photographs, ends up in heaps in flea markets ... (And at this point in time, I doubt there is a prevailing culture at all, not even a culture of preservation.)
All of this and then Cyposium ... And you mention not 'writing a whole other book,' but a 'whole other book' is present and is in every other book.
I loved Cyposium and the varied presentations; in some cases, I felt I had a good idea of 'what went on' originally; in others, I felt a bit lost. So the transmission of course is already secondary and then it's placed within the aegis of Waterwheel which adds its own metaphoricity, and we're into another regime in a way.

These are important issues, not off-topic. As you know there are huge efforts at reviving so-called 'dead tech,' worries about formats when codecs go out of style, attempts to reconstitute every book on Google and other sites, and digital archiving is now an extremely important part of librarianship; it's even a major. My own depressive feeling is that we're doing this in the face of armageddon ... Even I have my work at three universities and a museum, but I think no one will look at these 'things', no one will re/ assemble them, they're gone, just gathered, they'll disappear, they'll be dispersed once again –

On Tue, 29 Jan 2013, helen varley jamieson wrote:
i have visions of massive piles of digital data like junk-heaps, overwhelming &
impossible to catalogue & full of drivel & crap with only a few gems amongst it all.
"life-caching" is one thing – but also now that anyone can be an artist ... if there is no
selection process then it becomes meaningless, but a selection process is also totally
problematic.

On 29/01/13 7:18 PM, Alan Sondheim wrote:
It may not be about being an artist but preserving a habitus; I wish I really knew for
example what Chaucer's world 'felt like.' I used to argue constantly in my Brown M.A.
English program that my professors dealt with texts and not habitus; I had no idea for
example what it would 'feel like' to have had Gulliver's Travels on a table when it first
came out. All these little things, which is where oral history comes in; we did this with
my father before he died and I'm grateful for it. Instead of thinking about selection,
think of data-mining, informatics, both of which would make sense across or throughout
life-caching.

On Wed, 30 Jan 2013, helen varley jamieson wrote:
how does all this relate to the CyPosium? perhaps in the reminaging/re-membering to
construct our cyberformance culture/history? to visibilise the entangling of virtual & real
that cyberformance performs? asserting the connectedness of virtual & real is somehow
very political - we live in a society that divides & conquers, there is a constant pitting of
"us" against "them", so refusing the binary feels important.

On 30/01/13 5:17 PM, Alan Sondheim wrote:
One term that's used is 'mixed reality.' But this is why I stress that the body, culture, is
always already virtual, and that there is culture 'all the way down,' in other words every
species possesses culture – learning, memory, adaptation, local customs, and so forth.
Species and culture are entangled; it's not all in the genes …
I think the distinction is somewhat useful. I think of the virtual as related to the digital, to
the creation of potential wells and boundaries, to the making of distinctions, almost but
not quite like Spencer Brown's Laws of Form. Boundaries, this from that, membranes.
I think of the analog or the real as inert, there, a composition of the virtual in a sense,
Rosset's 'idiotic'. The analog also slips and is pre-corporate; the virtual is related to
capital in the broadest sense, to surplus. The analog is existent; the virtual harbors
memory in the broadest sense, and decays, corrodes, within the analog; the analog is
abject. And so forth. There are two entangled orders. Everything is entangled, everything
is accountable but unaccountable and unaccounted-for. Entanglement ensures the survival
of the abject, the sorrow of continuous passing, the increasing basis of the ignorance of
the subject of that sorrow.

Learn Together What it Means to be Connected ...

Annie Abrahams

During the summer 2013 while I was working on this book, I saw for the first time in my life a video of *Hole in Space* by Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz.[1] This media art work from 1980, this "pre-internet telematic installation/performance work" as Maria Chatzichristodoulou named it in her CyPosium introduction talk,[2] or "public communication sculpture" as the authors called it,[3] was presented in the opening exhibition Conversations Electriques of a new art space dedicated to contemporary culture in Montpellier, called La Panacée.[4] I already went back several times because I couldn't get enough of looking at the people reacting to the possibility of real-time speak, see and hear communication for the first time. What I like in online performance was already present there in this pre-internet piece: the audience who becomes the performer (who gets agency) and whose behaviour becomes the core of the aesthetic experience.

It was also in La Panacée on June 23 2013 that I heard Kit Galloway talk about this piece, stressing how difficult it was at the time to implement the technology (via satellites) and asking for more bandwidth, inciting us not to be satisfied with less: "we must create at the same scale as we can destroy", ecafe manifesto, 1983.[5]

At the same time, he told us how strange he found it that a museum wanted to show the unedited videos rather than a selection of the 'good' moments. So some of what I don't like about new media art and what often makes it boring was already there too: too much attention on the technology and hardly any thoughts on what this technology provoked and instigated in humans, how it changed their behaviour, their perceptions and ways of interacting.

How interesting it would have been to have had Kit Galloway in our CyPosium, I thought. I would have loved to hear him talk about the *Electronic Cafe International* (ECI),[6] another piece he did with Sherry Rabinowitz. This is what the ECI website says about its goals:

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1 See: www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/hole-in-space/ (accessed August 30, 2013).
2 Maria Chatzichristodoulou, "Cyberformance? Digital or Networked Performance? Cybertheaters? Virtual Theatres?… Or All of the Above?", pages 19-29 of this book.
3 Ibid.
4 See: http://pan.lapanacee.org/en (accessed August 30, 2013).
5 For the whole manifesto see the original website: www.ecafe.com/84manifesto.html (accessed August 30, 2013).
6 See: www.ecafe.com/about.html (accessed August 30, 2013).

For the last decade, ECI has been using technology to explore co-creation and collaboration in real-time networked environments. The prerequisites for this are: 1) employing a multitude of disciplines, 2) using the performing arts as modes of investigating these new ways of being in the world and 3) creating a new context so that new forms and content can emerge.

It would have been very interesting to hear Galloway's ideas about the results of this endeavour and how it relates to the network possibilities of today.

We didn't have Kit Galloway, nor Susan Kozel who I will mention later, but we did have many other interesting artists in this CyPosium. I am very happy we made this event possible, that we started collecting historical information, that we asked people to talk about their past work(s) – sometimes hardly anything has been written or archived about these projects.

I am also very happy with the experience itself. The conditions for the performances we were talking about resembled the conditions in which we met to talk about them. The whole event felt like one big metalogue. In 1970, Gregory Bateson defined a metalogue as "a conversation about some problematic subject. This conversation should be such that not only do the participants discuss the problem but the structure of the conversation as a whole is also relevant to the same subject."[7]

For me this reference is interesting. I do think the subject of the CyPosium was problematic – not only because of the difficulty of defining its borders, but more especially because it is very difficult to describe what is exactly happening in online performance. You had to be there!

One of my reasons to participate in the organisation of the CyPosium was that I thought, and still think, it important to try to find words, ways of thinking about online performance, analysing it. What is so specific? What can we communicate and how? How do we perceive our bodies when performing? Why does it have such a special energy? Why is it so demanding? How come we feel so close to others, so included and often so extremely exhilarated? Is it because online performance makes the borders between the performers and the audience fluid? Is it because it lacks hierarchy? Because it goes against total control?

Why is this so important? Because technology changes us, and if we want to get an idea of where is the limit between manipulating and being manipulated, we should make an effort to think about our own practice; we should try to practice close reading of it (or find other people to do this).

In 2012 I wrote an article with the intention to try to determine the special aspects of machine mediated communication and collaboration in my own performances. I wanted to catch the essence of these in a few short lines. This, as I should have known, was impossible. But I formulated motives, described means and I managed to give my work a succinct philosophical and political background. At the time I concluded:

In my web performances the performers have so much to do and so

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7 Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an ecology of mind* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press: 2000), 1.

little control that their communication both suffers (becomes more difficult) and prospers (becomes more honest) due to these conditions. The performers are so occupied by their interactions, that they don't have time to negotiate their image as they normally would on the Internet and so, almost without being aware of it, they show their vulnerabilities and doubts, their messy and sloppy sides, their 'hidden code'. They go beyond self-representation and the control that this requires.[8]

In the CyPosium discussion after block 3, Luka Prinčič suggested that it could be a question of organisation, that I might change my opinion if tasks were better delegated and the technology improved. I am not sure, and Roger Mills somehow affirmed this when he said: "I think because there's this dispersed dislocation within networked performance and particularly talking about music here, that you have to think and feel and listen so much more carefully, and that induces a heightened sense of intimacy and awareness between you. So I think you have to work harder to get many of those things that you might get from a co-located audience."

A lot more discussion took place on the 'side-lines' of the CyPosium – in the chat-window among the audience members and during the mediated discussions after the talks. I especially value this more informal 'side-line' activity, because there you are often confronted with concerns and issues that are not yet crystallized but do touch on new sensible areas of thought.[9]

Here I want to go back to a few remarks that stayed with me. In one of the discussions Adriene Jenik said "I am still shocked about how now we can connect with people, and we are still trying to figure out what to say one to another besides what time it is, and what's the weather like, and how to really have a deeper conversation." I agree completely. Somehow, as I pointed out in an interview in *Neural*, internet communication is still in its 'teens'.[10] But I am not shocked – it is normal and we can only go beyond this stage if we first analyse and accept it, as we should, in another context, and try to answer questions like "Why do we use the social web so massively?" We have to shift our attention and think less in results (compared to what we already know) as in processes – what is happening, how it feels and why we enjoy it. We are in unknown territory, you know (smile).

Joseph DeLappe saying "I'd be walking down the streets of New York City

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8 Annie Abrahams, "Trapped to Reveal - On webcam mediated communication and collaboration." *Journal of Artistic Research* 2 (2012), www.researchcatalogue.net/view/18236/18237 (accessed August 30, 2013).

9 In 2006 - 2008, during the online performance series *Breaking Solitude* and *Double Bind*, organised with panoplie.org, we decided that the only thing that would remain from the performance would be its immediate feedback, the text written in the chat window by the audience. At the time this was a way to confront the performing artists with the online situation, where the brute and often emotional reactions of the public would not always be as respectful as in the protected environment of art centres, museums and galleries. At the same time, the audience had the privilege to assist in a performance, to see and hear a person during an act of creation without being subject to the social rites of the art world. For more information on these performance series see: http://2008.panoplie.org/2008.panoplie.org/#//DoubleBind (accessed August 30, 2013).

10 Alessandro Ludovico, "Annie Abrahams interview" in *Neural - Networked Tangibility*, Issue 43, (2012): 41.

and seeing people and thinking I could click on them and get information" when he talked about his Gandhi performances, also points to a mindshift coming with being online. His remark shows how 'real' and 'online' mix – and, how difficult and probably useless it is to try to think the distinction. Roger Mills said more or less the same: "But what I was thinking, and the musicians said something similar as well, that their musical space is the music. It's not some sort of cyberspace or networked space other to where they are, but actually it's the music that they are in and that provides the space, they don't see any other networked space or cyberspace."

When writing this text I found myself wondering: "What would Suzan Kozel have to say about all this?" So I went back to her book *Closer* from 2007, where she asks what can be discovered as we come closer to our computers – as they become extensions of our ways of thinking, moving and touching. I noted some phrases which I underlined three years ago when I read the book for the first time. Here they are, still 'talking' to me:

> Page 70: "[B]y means of intentional performance with technologies we can regard technologies not as tools, but as filters or membranes for our encounters with others." Page 99: "Our virtual rapport had a greater physicality and intimacy than our real engagement." Page 107: "When I perform via videoconference link I do not think of the other performers and myself as occupying endpoints: instead I have a strong sense that we can slide into the grainy, two dimensional image, down an imaginary tunnel that links the remote locations." Page 108: "There is a constant process of deciphering involved, a constant need to interpret the code of the movement received and to respond to the disintegrating and recombining physicality that is generated." Page 111: "When the intensity of this not-quite-touching-touch is maintained, it can span long distances as well as tiny gaps." Page 141: "…, digitally mediated communications can be construed as processes of connecting, intents to achieve proximity, and attempts at touching, rather than the accomplished states of communication, proximity and touch." Page 145: " ...it is about modes of perception within a carefully constructed attentive field."[11]

I would like to end with a variation on this last phrase: "Online performance is about behaviour as an aesthetic material within a carefully constructed performance field." The best way to experience behaviour is to take part in it. And so, in order to be able to experience online performance the audience has to have agency. Would this mean that we should abandon the concept of audience altogether? I am not sure, but I am sure we will have to become more radical in our experimentations and start to be more critical towards our own work. (Too often, for instance, while assisting in an online performance I felt manipulated, guided in my actions under the pretext of giving me agency.)

We shouldn't be afraid to operate a 'niche', where we are 'just' our own audience. It might be a prerequisite for new discoveries, for the creation of a situation where we learn together what it means to be connected.

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11 Susan Kozel, *Closer* (Cambridge: MIT P - Leonardo Book Series, 2007).

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Appendices

Call for Proposals

Since the early 1990s, there has been a growing body of live performance that is situated online. These events differ enormously in form and content, are described with multiple terms (such as cyberformance, remote performance, internet theatre, screen stage, computer-mediated performance), are staged in a variety of online environments (such as text-based and graphical chat rooms, sound broadcast, real time choreography for screen, virtual worlds, games and purpose-built or existing platforms as for instance facebook) and engage diverse audiences. The net, however, is forgetful: it loses the memory of those events, and of the people who lived them, of the environments and communities who hosted them.

On 12 October 2012, a cyberformance symposium will be hosted by UpStage, the Waterwheel Tap and independent cyberformers, to discuss online performances with artists, researchers and interested participants. Questions we would like to tackle in the CyPosium include: What different kinds of events happened? What did they make possible? What was special about the event? Why were things done in a certain way and what were the results?

We invite proposals for presentations about past online performances. Presentations will be programmed into 30 minute timeslots, should be no longer than 20 minutes in duration (10 minutes will be scheduled for questions) and can be delivered in the Upstage platform (or in another platform if you wish). Presentations could involve webcasting, showing archives, talks, etc. A public chat will be available for interaction between the artists and audience. There will be facilitated discussions between programmes of presentations, to enable general discussion around common themes. Everything will be recorded for archival and documentation purposes.

If you are interested, please submit:
- a short bio;
-a short abstract of your presentation (not more than one page) including the platform you wish to use and any relevant information;
-one image that represents this past work;
-contact email and postal address.

Proposals must be emailed to proposal@cyposium.net by 15 of June 2012.

You will receive news of the CyPosium acceptance by the end of July and the CyPosium schedule will be announced in September.

Please note that technical and general support will be provided for presentations in UpStage and Waterwheel Tap; if you wish to use a different platform, you will need to organise support for that.

CyPosium

symposium · cyberformance
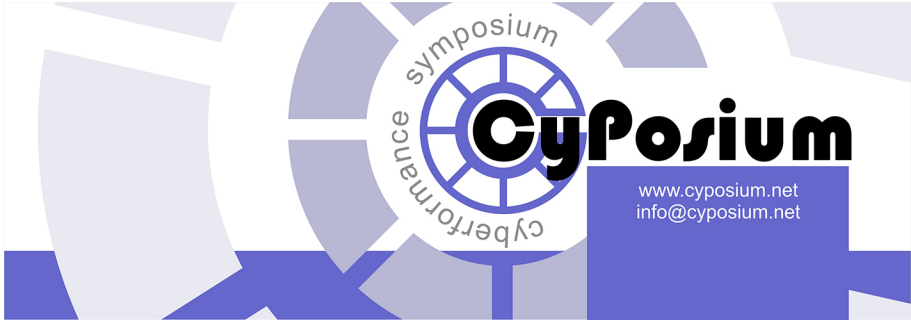
www.cyposium.net
info@cyposium.net

The **CyPosium** invites cyberformance **artists, researchers and interested participants to share and discuss past online performances:**

What different kind of events happened? What did they make possible? What was special about the event? Why were things done in a certain way and what were the results?

Presenters:
Maria Chatzichristodoulou
Auriea Harvey and Michaël Samyn
Alan Sondheim
Miljana Perić
Stephen A. Schrum
Joseph DeLappe
Adriene Jenik
ActiveLayers
Roger Mills
Maja Delak and Luka Prinčić

Just like cyberformance, everything will happen online, in real time; All you need to participate is a standard web browser and broadband internet connection.

More information is available at www.cyposium.net, and there will be live links there on the day.

UpStage

WATER WHEEL

Friday 12 October, from 3pm UK time
(find your local time at www.cyposium.net)

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CyPosium Organising Team

Annie Abrahams has a degree in biology from the University of Utrecht and an MA from the Academy of Fine Arts of Arnhem. In her work, using video and performance as well as the internet, she questions the possibilities and the limits of communication in general and more specifically investigates its modes under networked conditions. She is known worldwide for her net art and collective writing experiments and is an internationally regarded pioneer of networked performance art. Abrahams creates situations meant to reveal messy and sloppy sides of human behaviour, to trap reality and so makes that reality available for thought. www.bram.org

Christina Papagiannouli is a London-based theatre director, musician and researcher. She holds an MA in Theatre Directing from UEL, a BA (hons) in Drama from Aristotle University and a Diploma in Drama from Kent University. Her practice-based PhD with thesis title *Etheatre Project: Directing Political Cyberformance* will be completed in 2014. Her paper "Cyberformance and the Cyberstage" was published in the International Journal of the Arts in Society during 2011. www.etheatre.info

Francesco Buonaiuto holds a Master of Arts in Theater with a thesis on internet and theater, and has realised some networked performances.

Helen Varley Jamieson is a writer, theatre practitioner and digital artist from New Zealand, based in Germany. She holds a Master of Arts (Research) from Queensland University of Technology, investigating cyberformance – live performance on the internet – which she has practiced for over a decade. She is a founding member of the globally-dispersed cyberformance troupe Avatar Body *Collision*, a co-founder of the UpStage platform, and co-curator of online festivals involving artists and audiences internationally. She is also the 'web queen' of the Magdalena Project, an international network of women in contemporary theatre. www.creative-catalyst.com

Katarina Đorđević Urošević was born in Belgrade, Serbia and graduated from the Academy of Art in Novi Sad, in painting. She completed her Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Studies in the Department of Digital Art at the University of Art, Belgrade in 2014, and holds a certificate from the IT Academy of Digital Design. Currently she works as an activist, painter, digital artist and webmaster. Katarina is a member of the Independent Association Panel of Art DIT (Digital Interactive Triptych), associate member of IADAS (International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences) and editor of Izlazak (an independent journalistic intelligence web site of cultural developments in the region and the world).

Martin Eisenbarth has a background in multimedia design and has been involved with the UpStage community since 2009 and developed DownStage, a new concept and architecture for the cyberformance platform, in his Diploma thesis (completed 2011). He is currently a freelance web developer and works on UpStage and DownStage in his spare time. For the CyPosium Martin provided essential technical, web site and email services and participated fully in the event.

Nathalie Fougeras is a French-Swedish artist, performer and art director who lives and works in Sweden. She holds a post-graduate qualification from the National Art School ENSAD Paris – ARI interactive research workshop – and studied the Arts (Doctor of Science, Technology and Aesthetics of Arts) at Université Paris 1 and Paris 8. She produced Stream On You at the Digital Center for Media Art in Brussels and is the art director of the streaming festival HÖRLURSFESTIVAL for live performance in Sweden. Nathalie's artwork explores a critical reading of media that shifts this reading into an mixed media installation or body media performance.

Suzon Fuks is an intermedia artist, choreographer and director exploring the integration and interaction of moving image through performance, screen, installation and online work. She was the Copeland Fellow and Associate Researcher in the Women Studies Research Centre at the Five Colleges, Massachusetts in 2012, and from 2009 to 2012 held an Australia Council for the Arts Fellowship. Suzon is co-artistic director of Igneous since 1997, founding-member of ActiveLayers, and the initiator and co-founder of WATERWHEEL.

Vicki Smith is a visual media artist and educator from Aotearoa/NZ. She developed the distance education cluster of schools WestNet, volunteers for the West Coast Kete community story project and is a trustee for Sailing for Sustainability and the Aotearoa Digital Arts Network. Her work links communities of practice and explores how connectedness can aid development through assiduous use of art, science and technology. Vicki is one of the founding members of Avatar Body Collision, who instigated the cyberformance venue UpStage where she creates, teaches and co-curates the annual festivals. She is exploring new technologies to observe connections to the old, weaving craft technology practices and networks. One of her creative vehicles is the wooden sailing vessel Kiritea.

The logo, flyer and web site banners for the CyPosium were kindly designed by Jelena Lalić, Milan Đurić and Katarina Đorđević Urošević from DIT (Digital Interactive Triptych).

CyPosium Book Contributors

ActiveLayers was formed in March 2008 by Liz Bryce, Cherry Truluck, Suzon Fuks and James Cunningham. Their work has spanned site-specific networked performance and cyberformance. They performed in Cherry Truluck's Masters presentation (2007), the UpStage festivals of 2007, 2008 and 2010, and the Mediatised Sites Performance Festival (2008). Works include *The Old Hotel II* (2007), *The Old Hotel III* (2007), *Calling Home!* (a 3-part project, 2008, *Part 1: Getting to Know One Another*, *Part 2: Staying in Touch*, *Part 3: The Big Get-Together*) and *Aquifer Fountain* (2010). They have explored various online platforms and contributed to labs in the development of Waterwheel and its Tap interface.

Adriene Jenik is a telecommunications media artist, research professor and Katherine K. Herberger Endowed Chair in Fine Arts at Arizona State University's School of Art. Her works, including *Mauve Desert: A CD-ROM Translation*, *El Naftaazteca* (with Guillermo Gomez-Pena), Desktop Theatre (with Lisa Brenneis and troupe), *SPECFLIC*, and *Open_Borders* (with Charley Ten), harness the collision of 'high' technology and human desire to propose new forms of literature, cinema and performance.

Alan Sondheim was born in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania; he lives with his partner, Azure Carter in Providence, R.I. A cross-disciplinary artist, writer, and theorist, he has exhibited, performed and lectured widely. In 2012, Sondheim had a successful residency at Eyebeam Art + Technology Center in New York; while there he worked with a number of collaborators on performances and sound pieces dealing with pain and annihilation. He also created a series of texts and 3d printing models of 'dead or wounded avatars.' His blog at http://eyebeam.org/blogs/alansondheim?page=24 presents much of this material.

Alberto Vazquez was born and lives in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He studied medicine and at the same time took up art, in particular sculpture, studying with renowned teachers. He is the director of Reciclarte, an arts group that works with waste and trash, and during the last six years he has also dabbled in the electronic arts and robotics as a form of expression, including online and real-time performances. He is an Ambassador of Water-wheel. He has exhibited in Argentina and abroad, and undertaken university teaching in both Medicine (Family Therapy) and Art. www.reciclarteargentina.com.ar

Annie Abrahams - see her biography on page 163 with the CyPosium Organising Team.

Auriea Harvey and Michaël Samyn started their collaboration in 1999. Harvey and Samyn have devoted their lives to the creation of elegant and emotionally rich interactive entertainment. As Entropy8Zuper! they created many websites and internet artworks such as: *Skinonskinonskin*, a series of interactive love letters; *The Godlove Museum* which fuses love, religion, politics and sex; and *Wirefire* which was their web-based performance environment. In 2003 they founded independent

game development studio Tale of Tales in Gent, Belgium, where they live and work, making genre defying video games such as *The Endless Forest*, *The Graveyard* and *The Path*.

Clara Gomes (aka Clara Games) was born in 1966. She is a researcher (F.C.T. - Science and Technology Foundation, Portugal) and is developing scientific and artistic research for a PhD dissertation in Communication Sciences, Universidade Nova de Lisboa/Universidad de Barcelona. She holds a B.A. and Honours Degree in Communication Sciences, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, M.A in Mass Communications, University of Leicester, post-grad. in Fine Arts, Universidad de Barcelona and is also a director (video-art, documentary), performer, actress (aka Clara Games). Clara has worked in several communication fields since 1988: journalist; correspondent in Asia; producer, assistant to the director, programmer and presenter in television; press attaché and public relations officer; and university lecturer in communication sciences.

Helen Varley Jamieson - see her biography on page 163 with the CyPosium Organising Team.

Joseph DeLappe is a Professor of the Department of Art at the University of Nevada where he directs the Digital Media program. He has worked with electronic and new media since 1983, in online gaming performance and electromechanical installation. Through description and analysis, DeLappe contextualized an approach to creative activities in computer games and online communities as locations for interventionist performances and/or sites for data extraction for the creation of artifacts. He traced a history of performative agency in computer games starting in 1997 when he first engaged with creating abstract drawings while playing 'first person shooters' with an Apple mouse reconfigured as a drawing tool. Since then, he has engaged in a series of performances in online shooter games using the in game text chat that combine aspects of political protest, historical reenactment and street theater. www.delappe. net

Maria Chatzichristodoulou (aka Maria X) is a cultural practitioner (curator, performer, producer, writer), Director of Postgraduate Studies and Lecturer in Theatre and Performance at the School of Arts and New Media, University of Hull, and holds a PhD in Art and Computational Technologies from Goldsmiths University of London. She is co-editor of the volume *Interfaces of Performance* (Ashgate, 2009) and the forthcoming volume *Intimacy Across Visceral and Digital Performance* (Palgrave MacMillan), which follows the Intimacy festival and symposium that Maria initiated and co-directed in London (2007). She also co-editor of the forthcoming volume *From Black Box to Second Life: Theatre and Performance in Virtual Worlds*, which follows a day of round table discussions Maria initiated at the University of Hull (Scarborough, 2011).

Maja Delak is a choreographer and a dancer. **Luka Prinčič** is a musician, sound designer and media artist. Together (also known as Wanda & Nova deViator) they are an artistic duo who work with a variety of media (performance, sound, video, physical computing, texts, situations) in order to research and reflect the state of contemporary living. Their collaboration started in 2009.

Miljana Perić holds an MA in ethnomusicology from the Faculty of Music in Belgrade. As a student at the Theory of Arts and Media Department at the Interdisciplinary PhD Studies of the University of Arts in Belgrade, she works on her thesis titled *Critical and Analytical Theory and Practice of the Activist Digital Theatre*.

Rob Myers is an artist, writer and hacker based in Vancouver. His art comes from remix, hacking, and mass culture, and has involved increasing amounts of computer code over time. He keeps starting companies to make art and technology, and has been a reviewer for Furtherfield since 2006. Rob is currently spending far too much time on LambdaMOO as his character Yarrel. www.robmyers.org/

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